

## Exploring Teachers' Responses to A Workshop For Developing Critical & Creative Thinking through Story Writing

### Meneroka Respons Guru Terhadap Bengkel Untuk Membangunkan Pemikiran Kritis dan Kreatif Melalui penulisan Cerita

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#### Abstract

Current Malaysian educational policy requires school teachers to include critical and creative thinking in their classrooms; however, few teachers have been trained to do so. The research investigated an approach for developing teachers' critical and creative thinking through story writing. Qualitative research methodology was employed to explore teachers' understanding and views of the program. The results yielded four main themes, namely: Benefits, Challenges, Satisfaction and Improvement of the Writing Thinking Stories (WTS) program. Participants acknowledged that the program presented new ways for teaching critical and creative thinking (CCT) in a meaningful environment. Some challenges included overcoming caution when being creative; integrating philosophical concepts into their stories and a lack of fluency in English resulting in some participants requesting the chance to write stories in their mother tongue in groups. There was general satisfaction with the program, although some participants expressed a need for training in Community of Philosophical Inquiry (COPI) prior to the program. All in all, the WTS program resulted in teachers successfully producing short thinking stories that integrated values and CCT in a fun and meaningful way.

**Keywords:** Story writing, Critical and Creative thinking, Community of philosophical inquiry.

#### Abstrak

Dasar pendidikan Malaysia semasa memerlukan guru sekolah memasukkan pemikiran kritis dan kreatif dalam bilik darjah mereka; walau bagaimanapun, beberapa

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guru telah dilatih untuk berbuat demikian. Penyelidikan menyiasat pendekatan untuk membangunkan pemikiran kritis dan kreatif guru melalui penulisan cerita. Metodologi kajian kualitatif telah digunakan untuk meneroka pemahaman dan pandangan guru terhadap program tersebut. Hasilnya menghasilkan empat tema utama, iaitu: Faedah, Cabaran, Kepuasan dan Penambahbaikan program Writing Thinking Stories (WTS). Para peserta mengakui bahawa program itu menyampaikan cara baharu untuk mengajar pemikiran kritis dan kreatif (CCT) dalam persekitaran yang bermakna. Beberapa cabaran termasuk mengatasi sikap berhati-hati apabila menjadi kreatif; mengintegrasikan konsep falsafah ke dalam cerita mereka dan kekurangan kefasihan dalam bahasa Inggeris menyebabkan beberapa peserta meminta peluang untuk menulis cerita dalam bahasa ibunda mereka secara berkumpulan. Terdapat kepuasan umum dengan program ini, walaupun beberapa peserta menyatakan keperluan untuk latihan dalam Komuniti Inkuiri Falsafah (COPI) sebelum program ini. Secara keseluruhannya, program WTS telah menyebabkan guru-guru berjaya menghasilkan cerpen-cerpen yang menyepadukan nilai dan CCT dengan cara yang menyeronokkan dan bermakna.

**Kata Kunci:** Penulisan cerita, Pemikiran Kritis dan Kreatif, Komuniti inkuiri falsafah.

### Introduction

Nowadays in education, we hear a lot about and critical and creative thinking, The Malaysian Educational Blueprint (MEB) beginning in 2013 until 2025 is no exception to this with its plan for reforming education to make it on par with international standards. The blueprint exhorts teachers to improve their practice by adopting modern teaching methods and up to date educational resources that encourage students to become lifelong learners who are innovative problem solvers, active learners and high order thinkers. This emphasis on creativity is understandable given the fact that its applications span countless aspects of modern life. has been the prime mover behind pervasive transformations in the economy and culture (Florida, 2012). This is true of critical thinking as well. Both creative and critical thinking are viewed as interrelated skills that can be learned, developed and fostered (Combs et al., 2009). Hence, educators and employers worldwide stress these thinking skills as a priority for their students and employees.

Most scholars agree that creativity is the ability to produce work that is novel (i.e., original, unexpected), high in quality, and appropriate (i.e., useful, meets task constraints). It is crucial at both at the societal and personal level. For the latter, it is important to face daily life problems and for the former it leads to new products, inventions, artistic works, etc. For individuals and societies, remaining competitive necessitates adapting creatively to changing demands in countless domains

(Sternberg et al., 2002). Most definitions of creativity focus on originality/novelty and utility/appropriateness within a certain context.

Creativity and critical thinking are multidimensional and complex. They are not the result of a single force but rather the interaction of factors. These thinking skills are transferable (Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013) and are not clearly delineated into stages and steps. There is close interaction between critical thinking and creativity; the two cannot be separated. Ennis defines critical thinking as the “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do.” This process includes assessing credibility and quality, developing arguments, asking suitable questions, planning and implementing, drawing inferences and conclusions and many other skills (Ennis, 1993, 180). In a review of 64 definitions of critical thinking, Geng pointed out that researchers agree on “judgment, argument, questioning, information processing, problem solving, meta-cognition, skill and disposition” as the main characteristics of critical thinking (Geng, 2014, 127).

In utilizing divergent and convergent thinking skills to generate creative products, one can focus on commonplace, everyday creativity, also known as the “little-c” that can be found in each person. Alternatively, the focus can be on eminent creativity or “Big-C” that can be found in geniuses such as Da Vinci and Dickens. Other dimensions have been proposed by researchers such as about learning processes and about professional creativity. This more comprehensive understanding of creativity can offer more specific and in-depth frameworks to expand and develop creative potentials (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). This paper benefits from this model as it views the learning and teaching of critical and creative stories as part of the “little-c” and “mini-c” to explore the processes that all learners use to become more aware of their higher order thinking.

Researchers distinguish three areas in the domain of teaching and creativity; teaching for creativity, teaching about creativity, and teaching with creativity. This is true as well for critical thinking skills. Each area has its own aims, knowledge base and assessments. When teaching for and about creativity, there is an expectation to teach with creativity. Similarly, when teaching for creativity (fostering the creativity of students) there is a need to teach about creativity. This requires a balance of knowledge in the domain of creativity and the special pedagogy of developing creativity that includes, but is not limited to, developing attitudes, actions, and specific contexts (Beghetto, 2017). This paper exam-

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ines the interplay between these dimensions in fostering the creative and critical thinking skills of teachers.

The idea of writing thinking stories as a method for developing teachers' and ultimately students' critical and creative thinking came and undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Kulliyah of education in IIUM, using short thinking stories as a stimulus.

COPI is a method developed by Mathew Lipman, a professor at Montclair University New Jersey, for teaching philosophical thinking to children. Lipman believed that philosophy is an essential part of education; if children are to grow up into wise, rational individuals with good decision-making skills (Lipman, 2003). To this end, he wrote a collection of short stories containing philosophical elements i.e. philosophical concepts, issues and questions, using children as the characters of his stories. After using these stories with Malaysian students it became clear that there was a since Lipman's stories are set in America with American culture and issues.

When conducting COPI, Lipman recommended getting students into a circle and reading one of his thinking stories after which students pose their own philosophical questions about the story. The aim, ideally, is to get students engaging in critical thinking by means of in-depth philosophical discussions, expressing their views and opinions about the philosophical questions, supporting their views with reasons and examples and analysing and evaluating the ideas of others, while at the same time questioning themselves about their own beliefs and assumptions

Converting the classroom into a "community of inquiry" in which students listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seeking to identify one another's assumptions (Lipman, 2003, p. 20).

In fact, COPI is not new. It has been practised around the world in numerous countries under the banner of 'Philosophy for Children (P4C). What is new here is the idea of training teachers to write short thinking stories for the development of their own critical and creative thinking. In other words, looking at writing thinking stories that contain philosophical and moral elements with the objective of promoting deep thinking on the part of the authors.

With this objective in mind, a workshop was set up to train a group of university lecturers at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) towards producing a module containing twenty short

thinking stories. The program comprised a workshop starting with an explanation about the theory behind COPI and thinking story writing, followed by participants being given three philosophical elements: a philosophical quotation, question and critical thinking skill as a stimulus to writing their own short thinking stories. In the light of the guidelines given to them in the earlier session, participants were asked to weave the three elements into their stories giving them total freedom about how they did it and what their story was about.

In literature, it is common for philosophical themes and ethical issues to be infused into literary works. It is therefore a common practise for literature students to identify these and explore them for the purpose of literary appreciation. Such activities often involve students creating their own literature in the form of stories, drama and poetry etc. The difference in this study is that the purpose of the story writing was not to create a work of sophisticated literary merit or beauty but rather to infuse philosophical elements for the purpose of developing critical and creative thinking in students. In other words, the stories are intended as a springboard for COPI and as such may be short and simple.

### **Methodology**

The idea of writing thinking stories to enhance teachers' critical and creative thinking skills is very new; hence there is little research in the literature about this. The study was intended to be an exploratory research with the aim of investigating teachers' reactions and responses to the writing process. This section outlines the details of the methodological underpinnings of the research, explaining the research design, informants and sample size, instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select four participants who experienced the workshop fulfilling the role of informants. (Given, 2008). In-depth interviews were conducted with these four participants to gather qualitative data about their opinions and experiences of the program and its perceived impact on their critical and creative thinking (CCT). The research questions posed by the research are as follows:

*RQ 1: What is the role of writing thinking stories (WTS) for developing teachers' critical and creative thinking?*

*RQ 2: What are the benefits and challenges of writing thinking stories to develop teachers' critical and creative thinking skills?*

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To explore in detail how participants made sense of their personal experiences in writing thinking stories (WTS), interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was utilized for both data collection and analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2007). In addition, the thinking stories written by the participants were shared at the end of the program as examples of authors' critical and creative thinking. The study's sample included four lecturers from different departments (Kuliyahs) in IIUM with varying degrees of knowledge and experience of CCT and literature. In other words, they themselves were willing to participate in the study, having a significant awareness of CCT.

In this study, we will refer to the four participants as P1, P2, P3, P4. The participating lecturers were selected because they had a different specializations and varying amounts of experience teaching in the university. They comprised both female and male lecturers who have taught their different subject areas for more than five years.

Following the models of critical and creative thinking referred to Fascione (2011) and Torrance (1966) were used to construct the semi-structured interview questions. Fascione's model of critical thinking comprises six sub-skills, namely: Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, Explanation and Self-regulation (Facione, 2011), while Torrance divides creativity into four main categories: Fluency, Flexibility, Originality and Elaboration (Torrance, 1981b).

ARCS model was also referred to as a guide for ascertaining whether the program was motivating for the participants (David, 2014). These dimensions of critical and creative thinking were used to formulate the interview guide as well as guiding the analysis of participants perceptions of WTS (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The audio-recorded interviews were conducted individually and the participants were asked about their overall understanding and experience of the WTS workshop.

### **Results and Discussion**

The main objective of the WTS workshop was to introduce the skill of writing thinking stories to a group of university lecturers as a stimulus for COPI, towards the development of students' critical and creative thinking skills.

The objective of this research, on the other hand, was to gauge participants' responses to the writing thinking stories process to explore their reactions and responses about the benefits and value of the program for their own critical and creative thinking.

Four main themes emerged as a result of the in-depth interviews that were conducted with four participants; these are: 1) Benefits of WTS; 2) Challenges of WTS; 3) Satisfaction with the WTS program and 4) Improvement of WTS. In addition, some insights were gained about the potential of WTS to enhance participants' own teaching methods for CCT.

***Theme 1: Benefits of WTS Programme***

This theme looks at the benefits lecturers felt they gained from the WTS program in relation to their critical and creative thinking. The following six sub-themes emerged under this category: i) New teaching method, ii) Doing Philosophy, iii) Environment, iv) Instilling values, v) Meaningful and vi) Promote creative and critical thinking.

New teaching method

COPI is an inquiry-based approach that encourages student-participation in deep philosophical discussions. WTS promotes this too and so the participants saw it as a new way of doing things that is more learner-centred than lecturing.

*...you're giving them the confidence, the creative confidence that when they (the students) see that challenges, they won't freeze, they try to (do it)... we hope that (P1)*

*I came to the workshop I heard the terminology, and about this specific methodology for the first time (P2)*

*I can dedicate a class or two for writing stories, I think the students would love it, instead of doing what they are doing now...they can come up with... say, look, we came up with this story... (P1)*

*...like the next semester maybe I will ask students to do story writing... for creative thinking... (P3)*

Doing philosophy

The respondents liked the idea of making philosophy easy by introducing it through short stories. This was a novel experience for them since their previous experience of Philosophy was that it is a heavy and complex subject. They found it challenging to integrate the three philosophical elements given to them for their stories; however, this stimulated their thinking process.

*I thought it was going to be difficult, I thought, okay, this was going to be challenging. It was challenging and I was thinking why are we beginning with philosophy, if that's the whole aim of the program, then that's a different thing.. .but if this is wisdom, and what we mean by wisdom is philosophy, then that's the only way to start, but if we are not*

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*seeking philosophy 'philosophy', then we start at the easier place and but gradually graduate... into philosophy (P1)*

*Yes, it's very interesting, I really like it, because the... the way we use the.. this story is not too...high level... we try to...to make some ideas.. simple... that to come down to earth to talk to the specific people... like, I say, youth... It (philosophy) is high (level), but a person has to upgrade himself. Like we are doing... we are bringing it down... that is interesting (P3)*

The concept of 'doing philosophy' was initiated by Lipman (2003) who proposed COPI as a simpler way to get children applying philosophical thinking using short stories as a stimulus.

### Environment

Another important factor in WTS was the environment of the workshop. The three philosophical elements given to the participants to be included in their stories; the examples of thinking stories given by the facilitator and the mix of like-minded people from different backgrounds and specializations plus the positive personalities of the facilitators created a unique and conducive atmosphere.

*We had very useful discussions, very good new thing for me, it looked like an usrah.. familiar, without any formalities, it's very simple, humble, that's all good. (P3)*

*In my opinion, I think that's important, if you (the participants) are all of the same race and the same mentality, as I don't think as I can be creative as seeing strange things...coming from different cultures (P1)*

*...always when we bring in many people, (from) different backgrounds, they learn always, it's like you go to the botanic garden, you have many flowers... So you will learn... by force (laugh)... even if you're a doctor, you will learn.... so diversity is its fertilizer (P3)*

### Instilling values

The respondents acknowledged the potential of WTS to infuse values into their stories, which could influence students' morality. The respondents explained:

*We have too much information now was created by academicians but this information is not benefiting the community, but the writing of the stories it is some of the parallel, it has higher potential or the bigger potential to guide the community to get some philosophical approach ..(P2)*

*...it's huge, it's about wisdom, it's about.. how the knowledge and wisdom should go together, the character... the morality, er..what is the*



*role of knowledge in moral development, morality..it's a... it has... many philosophical ideas(P3)*

Meaningful

Putting philosophical elements into their critical thinking into their stories made WTS meaningful for the participants:

*I saw that fable would be the most suitable genre for whatever we are doing, like animals, of course children will like that, it is loaded with meaning, so if you try to load it, because I'm not an expert, so if I try to load it with meaning, fable is the carriage that usually has a lot of loaded meaning (P1)*

*I think so, and yes, it has those themes like arrogance, evil, it's not really high quality story, I don't think anybody will publish it (laughing)but it had some meaning (P1)*

Promote critical and creative thinking

i. Critical thinking

In spite of the short duration of the program the participants successfully composed original thinking stories applying the sub-skills of critical thinking such as: Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, Explanation and Self-regulation (Facione, P. A., 2011).

*I was judging what is the situation to express the ideas that are related to the matters of evil and arrogance (P1)*

*...but I did interpret uhm personally I mean by myself you just know it to understand, how do I want my reader to see what context do I want (P4)*

*I mean even when I was writing this one, I was criticising myself, maybe yes..maybe I put myself into the shoes of the small boy, and also I was just thinking if I was able to be here, in his place (P2)*

ii. Creative thinking

The four dimensions of creative thinking outlined by Torrance (1981b) namely: Fluency, Flexibility, Originality and Elaboration were also evident in the participants' stories, although flexibility was less common due to the short duration of the program.

*(The story was) Very original (laugh) because I just sat there for... I thought for half an hour... (P4)*

*...the topic about the story, helps you to be creative, and your creativity also helps you to develop the story... because that's why I say reading the story is one thing, writing the story is one thing, it is another level, so that level.. it is a creativity level... (P3)*

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### *Theme 2: Challenges of WTS*

The challenges faced by respondents in relation to critical and creative thinking fell into three main categories: 1) Care with creativity, 2) Difficulty and 3) Weak English. The quotes below illustrate this:

#### Care with creativity

Participants felt they needed to be more careful when dealing with thinking especially in relation to Islam, Al-Quran and Sunnah (Fauzi, 2015):

*...being a Quran Sunnah person or a student, there's a part by which it tells you that we cannot simply interpret away, you know, at will, there is a legacy that you need to abide, to follow, you know, so, I'm always in between that... (P4)*

*...sometimes some extreme questions...something erm... you have to stop there because there's limitation for everything, for example they say there is no limitation in human thinking, that's why..they try to reposition the human being, as god on Earth, as 'logos', for the Greek, where god is a human being... (P3)*

#### Difficulty

Some participants expressed that they faced challenges during the WTS program:

*I think the place we started was a bit difficult... (like the) nature of evil.. these are high level stuff, so if we began, at a slightly easier place.... but that's provocation (philosophical elements), so we need it, the provocation (P1)*

*...and the challenge comes, starts when em..when we were given these three envelopes and to include all these three er..phrases or sentences in our story, I think that's the biggest challenge, because the challenge it kept me stuck for a while, you know, how do I design, how do I write, because initially what I wanted to write was like er..replicating the stories from the Quran.... (P4)*

*I found it enjoyable even though it was very difficult to find the idea, (P2)*

#### Weak English

Some participants reported that they had lots of ideas but had difficulty expressing them in English. Participant 2 explains how her English language had deteriorated as a result of teaching.

*...my language become some...at the end of the semester, became so broken because what we read only the broken..., even PhD, Master*

*and also the undergraduate, the number two I read only academic works, so, as a result, all language become so.....(deteriorated) (P2)*

*Not that difficult (to get ideas)... but the (problem) ...is how to combine them, you know... in English, (laugh) you got barrier...(P3)*

### **Theme 3: Satisfaction with WTS**

The enthusiasm and sincerity shown by participants when responding to the interview questions suggest that they found the WTS program very motivating. Possible reasons for this correspond to the four dimensions of Keller's ARCS model of motivation (David, 2014) as follows. Firstly, the WTS approach *engaged* participants by getting them to apply critical and creative thinking. Secondly, the respondents felt the new teaching method was *relevant* to them. Thirdly, writing their own thinking stories and integrating the philosophical elements was challenging so they experienced a sense of accomplishment and *confidence* after completing it. Lastly, the environment of the workshop were stimulating which gave participants a sense of *satisfaction*.

#### Attention

*Ya, erm, many ideas because ideas never stop, what was interesting was that I was writing one page story then I was reading it at the end of the workshop and when you mentioned some other options how to continue, some kind of discussion, you remember, then I started writing it and when I was at home, I was adding around 2 pages more and I didn't know where to stop, sometimes I feel I have to stop here, now I'm still adding, adding, adding and until it becomes 3 pages story (P2)*

*I just sat there for..I thought for half an hour, just thinking because, I have 3 strips of sentences, phrases from, from the envelope and I have to think what to write of these 3 things and as I said I was stuck for a while ..and... I.. I just, start.. something that I should start, and when I started, I just wrote it through for another one and a half hour (P4)*

#### Relevance

*Definitely useful, but relevant, I didn't get what you meant, oh yeah, it's relevant to what I do, I mean it's relevant to my study, the literature, this is one of the courses taught in the English Department, creative writing, and also it relates, it's integrated to what I teach, creative thinking (P1)*

#### Confidence

*Yes., it is enjoyable, not, it wasn't difficult (P2)*

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*So before the program, I never challenge myself to come out with the stories to actually create some fiction, so the program is putting you in a place where you have to challenge yourself... and based on the push, you can say that I have more confidence, so I tried something novel (P1)*

### Satisfaction

*Wow.. you know by this time you shouldn't ask how satisfied but how happy I am, so happy (laughing) satisfied 100% (P4)*

*Ya, Alhamdulillah, that's why I came here, I was very happy (P3)*

*I am very much satisfied, but we have to continue it... (P2)*

### **Theme 4: Improvement of WTS**

Whilst the respondents found WTS a positive experience, there were some minor suggestions for improvement including: 1) Stories, 2) Group work 3) Mother tongue, 4) Goals and training.

#### Stories

Another respondent said they had to discover how to write the thinking stories for themselves and would have benefitted from more instructions about literary elements.

*....maybe (can) we get a little bit down to...ermm (because) thinking is a very huge empire, very big space, make it more purposive thinking, in what direction...(P3)*

*...the story writing part, I think if we want to follow the traditional approach, these are the characters, these are the themes, the setting, so a good setting will have these qualities, a good character would have these qualities, this is your genre, introduction to genre... (P1)*

#### Group work

One or two respondents suggested writing thinking stories in groups to reduce the burden of finding ideas, while another suggested pair work.

*Yes, if you are willing to open the program to the wider (audience), we can have a really big team, one team one team to 20/20/20 each of them are going to prepare one text books, it's a lot of job, it's up to you,(P2)*

#### Mother tongue

Allowing participants to write in their own mother tongues could facilitate the creative process enabling them to come up with ideas more easily. These could then be translated into English as necessary. This

may be particularly appropriate for Islamic education lecturers whose English ability tends to be less competent.

*Because your idea will flow better, perhaps (P1)*

*Ya.. Arabic is a very powerful language (P3)*

Goals and training

The original rationale for the WTS program was to prepare materials, in the form of thinking stories, for the university 'Flagship project'; an initiative to promote COPI and CCT for students. Two respondents said claimed that more information about the program's goals as well as training in COPI prior to the workshop would have been helpful.

*...but we have to continue it, to really make, to complete the methodology about how to teach it, but that one we need the help also from your side because we don't know much about the teaching methodology (P2)*

*..more thinking trainings I guess..I think for people who are frozen... (laughing) who who had their mind frozen you know..(laughing)for one specific area for so many years...you know so it would be just nice, warm up session, talks, brainstorming..ice breaking, you know.. (P4)*

**Conclusion**

The study explored lecturers' reactions to the WTS program which required them to compose short narratives containing philosophical elements. The semi-structured interviews guided by the theories of Fascione, Torrence and Keller revealed that participants were very positive about the program and offered insights into the benefits and challenges of the program for them. Participants acknowledged that WTS provided them with a new method for teaching as well as making philosophy and CCT fun and easy in a positive, meaningful environment.

Among the challenges they faced by the participants was the need to overcome their caution when being creative; the difficulty of integrating abstract philosophical concepts into their stories and their lack of fluency in English language. Overall, the participants expressed genuine satisfaction with the WTS program saying it was engaging, relevant, satisfying and enjoyable.

Lastly, the participants suggested minor improvements for the WTS program such as: giving more specific guidance about literary elements for story writing and allowing authors to work in small groups or pairs to write, perhaps in their mother tongue. Participants said they

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would benefit from prior training in COPI and more information about the overall goals of the program.

### Suggestions for further research

The information presented in this study presents the views and reactions of respondents about the effectiveness of the WTS program for their CCT. To ascertain real gains in CCT, more exposure to WTS followed by a quantitative measure of participants' CCT abilities would be necessary.

Another interesting research idea would be to implement COPI with students, using the thinking stories written by teachers attended WTS, and then to measure the gains and reactions of students in terms of CCT.

Finally, a noteworthy response came from one of the participants who is a Quranic studies expert. She explained how colleagues have become so insistent on providing evidence and support for argumentation that they have become mentally 'frozen'. She relished the opportunity to explore her imagination and let her mind wander during the story writing process, which she claimed it gave her a wonderful sense of fun and freedom.

*and of course I (was) just so relaxed... my mind... you know, just like fly away and just think and see whatever like when nobody are going to say you're wrong, or you are right huh..you know.. just a very great experience (P4)*

The study shows that the WTS approach stimulated teachers' CCT, enabling them to 'do CCT' by 'doing philosophy'. As such, it represents a preliminary step in promoting HOTS as advocated by the Malaysian Educational Blueprint, towards changing the thinking and attitude of teachers and students. WTS and COPI offer a unique practical approach that can change the nature of Malaysian classrooms to become more learner centred, meaningful and interactive in the future.

The emphasis is not just on the importance of knowledge, but also on developing critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills; leadership skills; proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and the English language; character and values; and a strong sense of national identity (MEB, p. 68).

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