

Strategies for Reducing Income Disparity in the Northern Region

Highlights

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减少北部地区收入差距的策略

Addressing the global issue of income disparity, the panel discussion "Reducing Income Disparity in Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER): Trends, Strategies and Challenges" was held on November 16, 2023, at the Malaysia SDG Summit 2023: Northern Region, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Tronoh, Perak. I had the privilege of speaking and moderating this discussion. My introduction highlighted key statistics on income disparity, the relevance of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in tackling income inequality, and the significant roles of government, development agencies, and academia.

Distinguished panel members included Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, former Minister of the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia; Datin Shahdee Ahmad, Director, Human Capital and Secretariat, CE's Office, NCER; and Prof. Dr. Russayani Ismail, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation, Universiti Utara Malaysia. They offered valuable insights.

The discussion focused on formulating effective economic policies, gender equity in economic development, the role of educational institutions in poverty eradication, partnerships between academia and the private sector, and the importance of research and innovation in addressing income disparity, particularly among indigenous communities. It also delved into the broader questions concerning SDGs, obstacles to poverty reduction, the impact of technology and digitalisation, and assessing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts.

DISTED College has been actively involved in various outreach initiatives, leading discussions towards achieving a more equitable society.

Prof. Dr. Vikneswaran Nair
President 院长



针对全球收入差距问题，"减少北部走廊经济区 (NCER) 的收入差距：2023年马来西亚可持续发展目标峰会"于2023年11月16日在马来西亚可持续发展目标峰会：北部地区，霹靂州端洛，国油大学举行。我有幸发言并主持了此次讨论。我在开场白中强调了收入差距的主要统计数据、17项可持续发展目标 (SDGs) 与解决收入不平等问题的相关性，以及政府、发展机构和学术界的重要作用。

尊贵的小组成员包括马来西亚首相署经济规划部部长拿督斯里慕斯塔法 (Dato' Sri Mustapa bin Mohamed)、NCER 行政长官办公室人力资本与秘书处主任拿汀沙迪阿末 (Datin Shahdee Ahmad) 以及马来西亚大学研究与创新副校长鲁萨尼依斯迈 (Russayani Ismail) 教授。他们提出了宝贵的见解。

有关讨论的重点是制定有效的经济政策、经济发展中的性别平等、教育机构在消除贫困中的作用、学术界与私营部门之间的伙伴关系，以及研究和创新在解决收入差距，特别是土著社区收入差距方面的重要性。会议还深入探讨了有关可持续发展目标、减贫障碍、技术和数字化的影响以及评估减贫工作成效等更广泛的问题。

立达学院积极参与各种外联活动，引导人们讨论如何实现一个更加公平的社会。

(Mandarin Translator, Dr. Tan Sze Huey, Senior Lecturer, School of Pre-University)

Empowering DISTED College Students Through Self-Defense Club

In an age when personal safety is a top priority, self-defense club provide numerous advantages to students. This club offer a sense of security, physical fitness, and personal empowerment.

Firstly, self-defense club impart practical skills for self-protection in various situations, a crucial life skill, particularly for students studying away from campus. This knowledge instills a sense of security. Additionally, participation in self-defense club promotes physical fitness by enhancing strength, agility, and stamina, contributing to improved overall health. This is particularly valuable for students who spend long hours studying.



Furthermore, self-defense club boost self-confidence. Learning these techniques makes students feel more capable and less vulnerable, positively impacting their academic and personal lives. Moreover, this club foster a sense of community and belonging among DISTED students who often miss out on social interactions. Joining a self-defense club allows them to connect with like-minded peers, forming friendships and support networks.

In short, self-defense club offer invaluable benefits to students. They provide practical self-defense skills, enhance physical fitness, boost self-confidence, and create a sense of community. By empowering students in these ways, self-defense club prove to be indispensable for their well-being and safety.

Navitha Gunalan
Lecturer, School of Computing & Engineering

Addressing Toxic Heavy Metals: Lessons from Pollution Incidents and Innovative Remediation



Source of picture: <https://soyacincau.com/2019/03/16/pasir-gudang-chemical-pollution/>

Toxic chemical pollution incidents have been a recurring global issue since the 1970s, with notable cases like the Seveso incident in Italy and the Bhopal tragedy in India. Malaysia's rapid industrial development has led to an increase in potentially toxic metal emissions into the environment. In 2019, a toxic chemical pollution incident occurred in the Pasir Gudang industrial area of Johore, affecting over 5,000 people, primarily children who experienced respiratory symptoms. Even trace amounts of certain metals, particularly heavy metals, can have severe health consequences, as they can accumulate in the food chain over time. Lead and mercury are two such metals notorious for their harmful effects.

Lead can enter the human body through water supply systems that once used lead pipes and settling lead compounds from car exhausts onto nearby crops. Mercury contamination, exemplified by the Minamata incident in Japan, can occur through wastewater discharge from factories, runoff from crops treated with mercury-based fungicides, and timber treatment processes.

Addressing the issue of toxic heavy metals necessitates ecologically safe and innovative remediation methods. Traditional approaches have limitations, such as physical, chemical, and biological methods. Adsorption, a physicochemical surface phenomenon, offers a cost-effective, flexible, and efficient technique for removing heavy metals like mercury, lead, cobalt, chromium, arsenic, and uranium from contaminated ecosystems.

To understand the toxicity of these metals, students at DISTED College's Pre-University Studies in Cambridge A-Level programme learn about the mechanisms involved, such as complexing with $-CO_2^-$ and $-SH$ groups on amino acid sidechains, disrupting the tertiary structure of proteins and their proper functioning. This knowledge is crucial in developing effective strategies for mitigating the impact of toxic heavy metals on the environment and human health.

Dr Loo Ai Yin
Senior Lecturer, School of Pre-University Studies

Animating Creativity: A Journey through Stop-Motion

In partnership with Penang Digital Week, the School of Computing and Engineering's Digital Creative and Multimedia Production team conducted an engaging stop-motion animation workshop. This workshop aimed to inspire creativity in participants and guide them in expressing their innovative ideas through frame-by-frame photography.

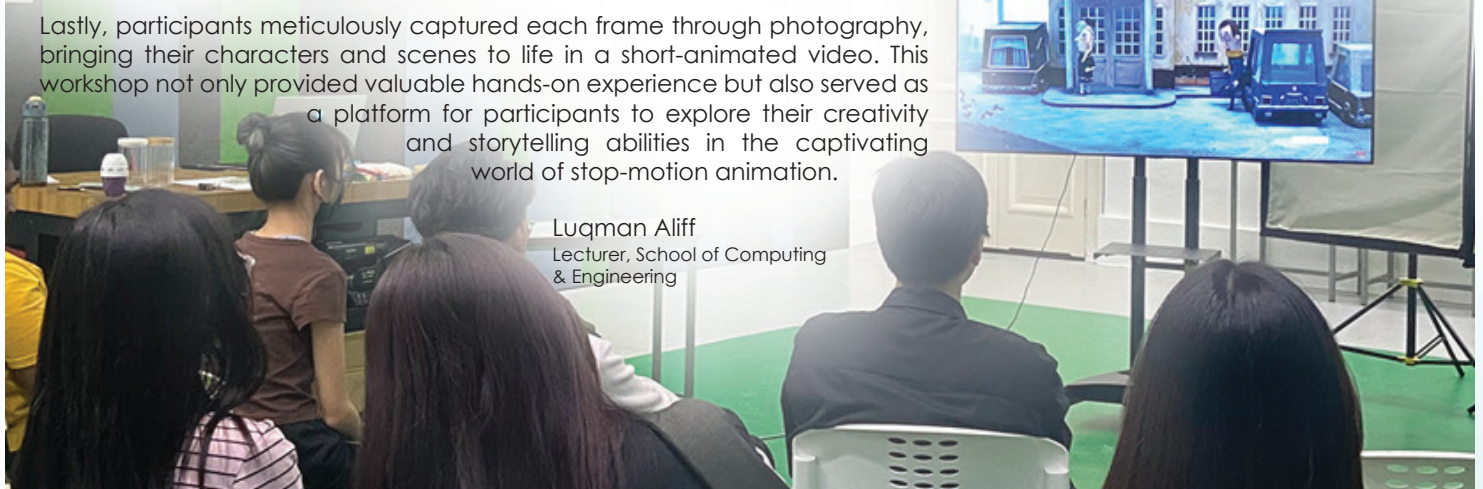
Stop-motion animation is a captivating form of filmmaking that involves capturing individual frames and subtly adjusting the subject between each shot. When these frames are played in rapid succession, they create the illusion of movement, offering a unique storytelling medium.

The workshop began with a showcase of diverse stop-motion animation examples, spanning themes and styles like Claymation, puppet animation, pixilation, and cut-out animation. This introduction aimed to spark participants' imaginations and encourage creative thinking, exposing them to the possibilities within the realm of stop-motion animation.

Storyboarding was a vital component of the workshop, providing participants with a blueprint for their animations. It guided them through the planned sequence of scenes and details before production began, ensuring a cohesive narrative. Participants then embarked on the hands-on process of crafting characters using various objects and materials, aligning with their storyboards and storylines. The process encouraged experimentation and creativity.

Lastly, participants meticulously captured each frame through photography, bringing their characters and scenes to life in a short-animated video. This workshop not only provided valuable hands-on experience but also served as a platform for participants to explore their creativity and storytelling abilities in the captivating world of stop-motion animation.

Luqman Aliff
Lecturer, School of Computing
& Engineering



Embracing Vulnerability: Addressing Men's Mental Health

In recent times, there has been a growing willingness among people to discuss mental health issues, breaking the taboo surrounding the topic. According to the Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019, the diagnosis rate of depression was lower in men (2.0%) compared to women (2.6%). However, these statistics may not accurately represent the true prevalence of depression in society. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2019 that men in Malaysia have a significantly higher suicide mortality rate, 6.6% higher than women per 100,000 people. This raises questions about the accuracy of depression statistics.

Traditional gender roles often place men as providers and heads of households, imposing immense pressure to support their families. Research by Brené Brown in her 2012 Ted Talk "Listening to Shame" revealed that men frequently experience shame and struggle to be vulnerable about their challenges. Fear of appearing unmanly or weak hinders them from seeking emotional support. The societal expectation of masculinity discourages emotional expression, leaving many men without

a social support system. Consequently, they bottle up their emotions until they reach a breaking point, leading to drastic actions like suicide.

As educators at DISTED, on World Mental Health Day, we have an opportunity to change this narrative. We should encourage young men to embrace vulnerability as a strength and foster open discussions about emotional well-being. By doing so, we can help them recognise the benefits of seeking emotional support, even in practical aspects of life. This shift in mindset may prevent them from taking regrettable actions in the future and lead to better mental health outcomes.

Farrah Sow
Lecturer, School of Psychology



Bingo Championship

"In bingo, it's all about those lucky numbers!"



On a sunny afternoon at Disted College, we celebrated the thrill of bingo. The event was a delightful occasion filled with laughter, cheers, and a healthy dose of friendly competition. The Disted College Student Representative Council (SRC) hosted the "Bingo Championship" activity on October 26, 2023. The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with echoing cries of "Bingo!" and playful banter creating a sense of togetherness. The activity featured several rounds of exciting bingo games, and participants were fully engaged, eagerly marking off numbers as they were called out.

What truly set this event apart was the strong bond among the participants. It was an afternoon spent not only in the pursuit of victory but also in the joy of spending quality time with old and new friends. Laughter filled the hall as numbers were called, and every victory was celebrated enthusiastically.

Ultimately, we left with cherished memories and a more profound sense of community. The Disted College SRC Bingo Championship was more than just a competition; it was a chance for everyone to come together, have fun, and build lasting connections. We are excited about the prospect of bringing you more such events.

Student Representative Council (SRC)

Mentoring and Personal Growth in the SRC

As a proud graduate of 2023 and the Ex-Vice President of DISTED Student Representative Council (SRC), I have had the privilege of witnessing the profound impact that student leadership can have on individuals and communities. My journey with the SRC has been transformative one, and it has left an indelible mark on my personal and academic life.

During my time at DISTED, serving in the SRC exposed me to a diverse range of experiences that reshaped my worldview and honed my skills. It offered a platform to discover new passions, develop formidable leadership abilities, and forge invaluable connections that continue to benefit me well beyond my graduation.

The collaborative spirit within the SRC was instrumental in planning and executing events and initiatives that not only promoted academic excellence but also fostered social engagement and personal growth. It was heartening to know that our efforts directly impacted the lives of our fellow students and the wider community.

The SRC advisor played a vital role in mentoring and offering

support throughout the challenges and opportunities of my leadership role. His wisdom and assistance were instrumental in my personal growth and made a substantial contribution to the success of SRC's initiatives.

In conclusion, my tenure as the Vice President of DISTED SRC was an experience that broadened my horizons, enriched my life, and left a lasting impact on the people and communities we served. It is an opportunity I will forever cherish as I step into the world as a graduate of Class 2023, carrying the valuable lessons and experiences with me into my future endeavours.

Emily Sek Kea Xin

Alumni of Diploma in Business Studies (2023)



Women Leading the Fight Against Mental Health Stigma

Mental health stigma remains a pressing issue, causing many to suffer silently due to fear and societal stereotypes. Women are emerging as catalysts of change, actively challenging the stigma, breaking the silence, and advocating for better support. Women bear a disproportionate burden of mental health stigma due to societal expectations and gender roles. In Malaysia, the "Pink Shirts Movement" empowers women to share their mental health experiences, fostering candid conversations and reducing stigma.

Celebrities like Meghan Markle and Lady Gaga have openly discussed their mental health struggles, demonstrating that vulnerability can be a source of strength. Social media platforms offer women a powerful space to share experiences, connect, and advocate for change. Hashtags

like #MyMentalHealthStory create communities where women find solace in the collective struggle against stigma.

As women continue to speak out, they challenge mental health stigma and promote a culture of empathy and acceptance. Their efforts are reshaping the narrative, encouraging open conversations, and fostering a more compassionate society where mental health is not a source of shame but an opportunity for connection and healing.

Thiresyinie A/P Tamil Chelvam,
Lecturer, School of Psychology

