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ADVANCING ARCHIVAL AWARENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) OF MALAYSIA: EXPLORING ARCHIVAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of archival awareness within the higher education landscape. The aim of this study is to delve into the implementation of educational archives programs facilitated through collaborative partnerships between the National Archives of Malaysia and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the nation. This initiative is strategically designed to bolster archival awareness, particularly within the realm of professional education and training. By enlightening the breadth of opportunities inherent in such collaborations, this study serves as a beacon for fostering synergistic relationships between the National Archives of Malaysia and both public and private HEIs in Malaysia. Furthermore, it serves as a benchmarking tool for archival institutions, fostering heightened visibility and understanding within the archival domain. The primary objective of this study is to examine the educational archives program facilitated through collaborative partnerships between the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs in Malaysia. Specifically, the focus is on how this collaboration serves as an initiative to heighten archival awareness within the context of professional education and training. Additionally, this study aims to explore the diverse array of opportunities inherent in the partnership collaboration between the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs in Malaysia. This exploration seeks to uncover the potential avenues for collaboration and mutual benefit, shedding light on the mutual relationship between the two entities.

Keywords: Archives, Higher Education Institutions, Educational Archives, Skills Training, Partnership

INTRODUCTION

The growing support of HEIs in archival services has become significant to their future development especially in the context of professional education and training. Moreover, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in archival education. The HEIs as a center of academic excellence relies heavily on strategic cooperation with the industry in the development of teaching and learning curricula that are relevant to industry needs. The collaboration between universities and industry can generate rich and relevant educational content, fostering lifelong education (Bjursell, C., & Ramsten, A. C., 2020) and can enhance educational outcomes and align academic programs with industry needs (Perkmann, M., & Walsh, K., 2021). This will enhance the availability of local graduates. An active collaborative partnership between the archival institution and HEIs is critical for knowledge exchange, enhancing practical knowledge, boosting the level of graduate employability and strengthening the research and development activities.

For many HEIs, there are many opportunities to form a strategic archival learning collaboration and archives institutions are essential instigator and facilitators for collaborations. The positive relationship of this collaboration has led to mutually beneficial for both archival institutions and HEIs which may include knowledge exchange, public engagement, skills, and innovation development, career prospects and also experiences enhancement. Furthermore, this collaborative endeavor contributes to lifelong learning and community development, fostering partnerships in diverse cultural and economic initiatives. It enables universal access to information, preserves heritage materials, expands outreach to new audiences, and enhances core services, thereby propelling forward the collective mission of education and cultural preservation.

Acknowledging the growing demand for records and archives personnel within the industry, the National Archives of Malaysia has assumed the role of an advisory committee to numerous Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Malaysia. Recognized as a pivotal professional entity with a profound impact on higher education within the realm of archives and records management, the National Archives of Malaysia has strategically positioned itself to cultivate awareness across various facets within the higher education landscape. By spearheading initiatives aimed at fostering awareness, this agency is dedicated to nurturing a cadre of exceptional human capital capable of contributing to the global discourse.

In response to the growing industry demand of records and archives personnel, the National Archives of Malaysia has become an advisory committee to most HEIs in Malaysia. As known to all, the National Archives of Malaysia is a professional body that has a natural bias to directly related archival, historical, or conservation-focused disciplines. The range of potential partner academic disciplines with the National Archives of Malaysia can be overwhelming. A result of this is that innovative and exciting collaborative projects with records and archives disciplines can be focused as it may open more significant opportunities for more effective and efficient usage of archival services and materials as well as the development of new possibilities and capabilities. However, the study of educational archives programs through partnership collaborations between HEIs and the National Archives of Malaysia is still unknown and to date, limited study and there are no empirical studies found by research.

Despite the evident potential for collaboration, empirical studies examining educational archives programs through partnership collaborations between HEIs and the National Archives of Malaysia remain sparse and largely unexplored. This underscores the need for further research to elucidate the nuances and impacts of such collaborative endeavors, paving the way for informed decision-making and the advancement of archival education within the higher education field.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach, incorporating literature review, document analysis, and in-depth interviews with top management and senior archivists from National Archives of Malaysia and lecturers from HEIs across Malaysia. Situational analysis and unstructured face to face interviews with five respondents from the headquarters of the National Archives of Malaysia and five respondents from different HEIs were carried out to explore the archival learning activities through their collaborative partnership which emphasizes on the scope of types of educational archives programs, benefits and outcomes of the collaboration. All the information provided by the interviewees would be treated in strict confidence. The interviews ranged between 20 and 40 minutes and were audio recorded. Analysis of the qualitative data obtained through this intensive interview was done by coding the answers and marking discernible patterns and themes in answers. Therefore, all the interviewees' views and comments are described anonymously. The data collected are analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and opportunities in the implementation of educational archives programs through collaborative partnerships. Moreover, document analysis was employed to mitigate some of the ethical issues commonly associated with other qualitative methods (Khan, S. S., & Khan, H. R., 2020) and to glean valuable insights for summarizing this study. By examining a range of documents including the National Archives of Malaysia bulletin, policies, and standards, it became evident that National Archives of Malaysia has undertaken numerous initiatives to bolster its operations and enhance the quality of services provided to its users.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal overwhelmingly positive outcomes stemming from the educational archives program established through collaborative partnerships between the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs. These collaborative endeavors not only ensure the sustained viability of both entities but also bolster the credibility of academic subjects offered, given the National Archives of Malaysia's pivotal role and the HEIs' vested interest in its perspectives. Numerous educational archives programs have been successfully executed, signaling the effectiveness of these collaborative activities. Interviewees express confidence in the potential of such strong collaborative partnerships to facilitate the implementation of further educational archives programs. At the forefront of elevating the

National Archives of Malaysia's prominence within the realm of higher education, the agency has seamlessly fostered enriching partnerships and orchestrated numerous educational archival programs in collaboration with no less than ten Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Notably, five of these partnerships have evolved into strategic alliances bound by the mutual respect delineated in Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs). Prominent among these esteemed institutions are Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), and Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka (KUIM). The National Archives of Malaysia underscores the significance of these collaborations, which span across both public and private HEIs, encompassing research and development initiatives, student placement programs for industry training, consultancy projects, training sessions, seminars, and the pursuit of archival administration objectives. Through these synergistic partnerships, the National Archives of Malaysia continues to uphold its commitment to advancing knowledge dissemination, fostering academic excellence, and preserving the nation's rich historical heritage.

The findings collected from the in-depth interviews illuminated an understanding of the collaborative activities undertaken with HEIs. Interviewees described a specific array of educational archives programs, showcasing a focused spectrum of initiatives (Refer Table 1). This comprehensive of collaborative endeavors underscores the multifaceted approach adopted in enriching archival learning experiences within the academic sphere.

Table 1: National Archives of Malaysia collaborative activities with HEIs

Educational archives programs	1	2	3	4	5
The Archives Consumerism Clinic		√		√	√
File Description Program		√			
Audiovisual Records and Archives Mini Training Program		√			
Thematic Finding Aids Project		√			
Oral History Project	√	√		√	√
Seminar and Training series	√	√	√	√	√
Research and Development Project	√	√	√	√	
Student Placement Program				√	√

Moreover, the study identifies a multitude of benefits arising from this collaboration, including enhanced relationships between the archival and higher education industries, heightened visibility of archival institutions among young people, and knowledge exchange through seminars and training series. Interviewees stress the importance of meticulous planning for collaborative activities to ensure optimal outcomes for both parties involved. The growing demand for archival learning activities underscores the necessity for implementing collaborative programs, particularly spurred by the success of initiatives like the File Description Program, which has fostered substantial collaboration among various HEIs. The findings highlight the diverse range of collaborative partnership activities between National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs. The collaborative partnership between the National Archives of Malaysia and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has generated numerous opportunities that have proven beneficial to both entities, extending beyond merely raising awareness about the importance of archives. Qualitative findings underscore the existence of several opportunities stemming from this partnership (Refer Table 2).

Table 2: The opportunities of collaborative partnerships between National Archives and HEIs

The opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Knowledge exchange	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Audience development						√	√	√	√	√
Student engagement	√	√	√	√		√	√			
Transfer of technology		√				√	√			√
Enhanced student experiences	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Archival promotion and access		√				√	√	√	√	√
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These opportunities highlight the substantial roles played by the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs in elevating archival awareness, enriching the education system through enhanced teaching and learning activities, and fostering interactive relations between them.

CONCLUSION

This study enriches the literature by offering insights into an educational archives program that can be implemented through collaborative partnerships between HEIs and archival institutions. The program is designed to enhance archival awareness, particularly within teaching and learning activities, while better equipping future archivists with the necessary teaching skills. This, in turn, contributes to the advancement of educational practices in the field. Collaborative partnerships between the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs hold immense potential for enhancing archival awareness and education within the Malaysian higher education landscape. By fostering collaboration, resource sharing, and capacity building, these partnerships contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage, the advancement of academic research, and the promotion of lifelong learning. In addition, this collaboration has underscored the pivotal roles played by the National Archives of Malaysia and HEIs in elevating archival awareness, enhancing the education system through enriched teaching and learning activities, and fostering interactive relations between them. It emphasizes the necessity for both industry and academia to make sustained investments, cultivate understanding, and adapt at various organizational levels to establish a successful relationship (Kunttu, L., & Neuvo, Y., 2019). Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies and best practices for integrating archival education into higher education curricula, thereby ensuring the sustainability and relevance of archival awareness initiatives in the digital age.

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