

Educational Reform Through Industry Collaboration: Enhancing Student Competencies in Publishing Course

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the management of pedagogical innovation through industry collaboration and authentic assessment in PUB253, a publishing course within UiTM's Diploma in Communication and Media program. It explores how curriculum reform, guided by managerial strategies and policy alignment, enhances student competencies in communication, leadership, and teamwork while addressing challenges of conventional teaching methods. A mixed method design combined entrance–exit surveys with rubric based evaluations of publishing projects, presentations, and exhibitions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t tests, and correlation analysis, while qualitative reflections provided contextual insights. Results revealed significant competency gains, with mean scores rising from 1.23–1.24 at entry to 4.70–4.74 at exit, reflecting improvements of more than +3.45 points. Rubric evaluations corroborated these outcomes, with students consistently scoring above 4.2 in leadership driven tasks. A strong correlation ($r = 0.72$) confirmed alignment between student perceptions and observed performance. The findings highlight the managerial importance of embedding industry informed pedagogy and authentic assessment in diploma level education. PUB253's transformation from the program's highest failure course to one of its most successful was enabled by UiTM's Curriculum Review Policy and the HETVET@UiTM model, which institutionalized industry partnerships and resource mobilization. PUB253's competency gains directly fulfill MOHE's Education 4.0 employability agenda and MQA's graduate attributes, demonstrating how curriculum governance can sustain innovation to enhance course performance as well as students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Industry collaboration; authentic assessment; Communication skills; Leadership skills; Team work skills; Student competencies

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the Asia-Pacific region is experiencing mounting pressure to reform teaching methodologies so that graduates are not only academically competent but also industry-ready. Conventional lectures are effective to a limited extent in achieving curriculum objectives. They often fail to promote critical thinking and active engagement, leading to lower cognitive engagement and attendance (Zhang et al., 2020). Traditional teaching methods often focus on rote learning and theoretical knowledge, which can lead to low student engagement and poor retention of material (Marzolla et al., 2023). This approach does not effectively foster the development of technical skills necessary for modern workplaces and it leads to lower academic performance compared to innovative teaching method. For instance, students exposed to innovative teaching methods, such as problem-based learning (PBL) and virtual reality (VR), show improved academic achievements and conceptual understanding. For example, students in technical disciplines often struggle with applying their knowledge practically, which is crucial for their future careers (Kirubakaran et al., 2025).

For more than two decades, PUB253 relied on conventional teaching methods and static assignments that failed to reflect industry realities. Students were assessed through classroom-based written tasks, disconnected from the publishing. The impact was dramatic. PUB253 evolved from being the course with the highest failure rate to one of the most celebrated, consistently producing the largest number of grade A achievers. This “phase of success” underscores the transformative power of industry collaboration in reshaping higher education pedagogy. Recent scholarship affirms that embedding industry partnerships into diploma-level curricula enhances course performance, student achievement, and employability (Ali & Hussin, 2023; Moo Keng Hao, 2024). PUB253 now stands as a benchmark for teaching innovation, demonstrating that authentic, industry-informed assignments can elevate student competencies, equalize outcomes across diverse learner profiles, and connect academic outputs to commercial markets.

The turning point came with the introduction of industry collaboration as a central pedagogical principle. Students were tasked with producing interactive digital children’s books, transforming PUB253 into a production-based, industry-aligned course emphasizing experiential learning. They engaged in editorial, design, and marketing processes, participated in field trips to publishing companies, and interviewed editors, designers, and marketing teams to gain first-hand insights into the publishing pipeline. Collaboration with authors and illustrators further enriched creativity and teamwork. Each semester culminated in a book exhibition, simulating entrepreneurial realities and commercialization opportunities. This innovation enhanced student motivation and provided authentic exposure to industry standards and practices (Chong & Abdullah, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Collaboration between universities and industries also positively impact student performance by providing practical, real-world experiences. This collaboration helps bridge the gap between academic learning and industry demands, enhancing students’ readiness for the work place (Naseer et al., 2025)

Industry collaboration has therefore emerged as a powerful teaching methodology and assessment strategy in higher education. By embedding industry practices into curricula, students are exposed to authentic tasks, professional standards, and entrepreneurial realities. In PUB253, the production of digital children’s books served as both a teaching method and an assessment tool. Students were not only learning about publishing but also producing market-ready outputs that were evaluated based on creativity, teamwork, communication, and commercial viability. This aligns with Chong & Abdullah (2023), who highlight that collaboration with industry experts enhances curriculum relevance and ensures that student achievements are aligned with professional expectations. Wang et al. (2025) add that

commercialization within academic projects enhances student motivation and institutional impact, creating pathways for innovation and sustainability.

This study aims to critically analyze the transformation of PUB253 from conventional teaching methods to industry-collaborative pedagogy, examining its impact on student performance, competency development, and commercialization opportunities. By comparing cohorts and campuses, the research seeks to establish PUB253 as a replicable model of teaching innovation for diploma-level education in Malaysia and the wider Asia-Pacific region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pedagogical Innovation in Higher Education

Pedagogical innovation is increasingly framed as a strategic response to the complex demands of Industry 4.0, shifting the focus from transmission of content to the cultivation of transferable competencies and professional readiness. Contemporary models emphasize alignment among institutional mission, learner needs, and employer expectations, with innovation operationalized through curriculum co-design, integrated technologies, and iterative feedback cycles that strengthen teaching–learning coherence. Critically, innovation is not merely the adoption of tools; it requires re-engineering learning experiences to be active, authentic, and competency-driven, and demands capacity-building for educators to design, facilitate, and assess complex tasks that mirror real work.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) positions pedagogical innovation within a competency- and outcomes-based agenda that privileges employability, resilience, and adaptability. Expectations include curricular integration of experiential learning, industry collaboration, and digital fluency; governance mechanisms that benchmark student achievement to national standards; and assessment reforms that capture both disciplinary mastery and transversal skills. For diploma-level programs, MOHE’s emphasis entails clear graduate attributes, authentic assessment aligned with industry practices, and evidence of impact across cohorts and campuses. Thus, pedagogical innovation is both a classroom transformation and an institutional management strategy anchored in policy, quality assurance, and measurable outcomes.

Educational Management Discourse: Curriculum Leadership and Institutional Reform

While pedagogical innovation and authentic assessment are central to teaching reform, their sustainability depends on effective **educational management and curriculum leadership**. PUB253 should therefore be understood not only as a pedagogical experiment but as a case of **curriculum management reform** within UiTM’s institutional framework. Educational management literature emphasizes that curriculum innovation requires structured governance, policy alignment, and leadership commitment to ensure that reforms are embedded into institutional practice rather than remaining isolated initiatives (Fadzil et al., 2022; MOHE, 2025).

UiTM’s **curriculum review policy** explicitly demands that programs integrate **industry collaboration** to strengthen graduate employability. This policy aligns with MOHE’s competency-based agenda and MQA’s graduate attributes, which require institutions to demonstrate how curricula cultivate communication, leadership, teamwork, and digital skills. PUB253’s transformation from conventional written assignments to industry-informed publishing projects reflects UiTM’s strategic response to these policy imperatives. By embedding publisher engagement, book development, and commercialization into coursework, PUB253 operationalizes UiTM’s curriculum review mandate, ensuring that teaching innovation is institutionally managed and benchmarked against national standards.

Curriculum Management Case Study

PUB253 exemplifies more than pedagogical reform; it represents curriculum management and institutional leadership within UiTM's governance framework. Guided by UiTM's Curriculum Review Policy, which mandates systematic review every 3–5 years, the course aligns with MOHE's Education Blueprint, MQA's Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF 2nd Edition), and Education 5.0@UiTM. This structured process requires industry collaboration, digitalisation of assignments, and constructive alignment of learning outcomes to strengthen employability and readiness for Education 4.0.

The transformation of PUB253 from conventional written tasks to industry-informed publishing projects demonstrates UiTM's strategic implementation of these mandates. By embedding publisher engagement, book development, and commercialization into coursework, PUB253 operationalizes national priorities for competency-based education. From a management perspective, the course highlights how curriculum leadership can mobilize partnerships, allocate resources, and ensure compliance with quality assurance standards. Its replication at UiTM Negeri Sembilan underscores scalability, positioning PUB253 as a replicable model of curriculum governance that enhances graduate competencies and institutional credibility.

Authentic Assessment and Student Competency Development

Authentic assessment has become a cornerstone of higher education reform, particularly in contexts where student competencies must align with workplace realities. Unlike traditional examinations that privilege rote memorization, authentic assessment requires learners to demonstrate knowledge and skills through tasks that replicate professional challenges. Quinlan, Selleib, and Fiorucci (2025) argue that authentic assessment should prioritize meaningful engagement, while Zhan, Boud, and Du (2025) confirm that such practices enhance employability by mirroring workplace performance standards. Gravett (2025) further notes that authentic assessment increasingly incorporates digital credentials and workplace skills, bridging the gap between academic learning and industry expectations.

Within the Malaysian context, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) outlines 11 graduate competency domains: knowledge, practical skills, social skills and responsibilities, values and professionalism, communication skills, problem-solving and scientific skills, information management and lifelong learning, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, and digital skills. These domains provide a holistic framework for curriculum design and assessment, ensuring that graduates are prepared for both national and global demands.

In PUB253, authentic assessment is strategically aligned with three of these domains: **communication skills, leadership skills, and teamwork skills**. Communication is fostered through oral presentations and public exhibitions, leadership is cultivated through project management and booth organization, while teamwork is embedded in collaborative publishing tasks. By situating assessment within industry-informed contexts, PUB253 validates these competencies not only through academic rubrics but also through observable performance in authentic environments. This alignment demonstrates how authentic assessment can operationalize MQA's expectations, ensuring that diploma-level graduates acquire transferable skills essential for professional readiness in the communication and media industries.

Experiential Learning as a Reform Strategy

Experiential learning has increasingly been recognized as a transformative reform strategy in higher education, offering a departure from passive, lecture-based instruction toward active engagement with authentic contexts. It emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, and

application, thereby fostering deeper understanding and transferable skills. Shivaramu et al. (2025) demonstrated that experiential approaches in engineering education significantly improved both academic achievement and student motivation, while Sundman et al. (2025) highlighted its role in sustainability education, where experiential learning prepared graduates for interdisciplinary problem-solving and societal impact. These findings underscore that experiential learning is not merely an instructional technique but a pedagogical philosophy that situates students within real-world challenges.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education's Experiential Learning and Competency-Based Education Landscape (EXCEL) framework (MOHE, 2025) positions experiential learning as a cornerstone of curriculum reform. The framework emphasizes resilience, adaptability, and lifelong learning as graduate attributes, aligning national education policy with global workforce expectations. By embedding experiential learning into diploma-level programs, institutions are expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also industry-ready, capable of navigating complex professional landscapes with confidence and innovation.

Industry Collaboration in Curriculum Design

Industry collaboration has increasingly been recognized as a cornerstone of higher education reform, particularly in the Asia region where rapid industrial transformation demands curricula that are responsive to workforce needs. Vuoriainen et al. (2025) identified six critical factors—communication, collaboration, co-design, co-assessment, continuity, and commitment—that underpin successful partnerships between universities and industry. These principles highlight that collaboration must be systematic and sustained, rather than ad hoc, to ensure meaningful impact on student learning and institutional competitiveness.

Three successful findings from Asia illustrate the transformative potential of industry collaboration. First, in **China**, Zhuang et al. (2024) documented how universities embedded industry partnerships into diploma programs, enabling students to participate in co-developed projects with publishing and media companies. This approach not only improved technical skills but also enhanced employability by aligning academic outputs with market demands. Second, in **Japan**, industry collaboration has been integrated into undergraduate curricula through structured internships and co-assessment models, fostering leadership and teamwork competencies while ensuring that graduates meet Industry 4.0 expectations. Third, in **Singapore**, universities have adopted long-term partnerships with technology and creative industries, embedding real-world projects into coursework. Wilson (2025) noted that these collaborations strengthened student outcomes by situating learning within authentic professional contexts, thereby bridging the gap between academic theory and workplace practice.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Students enrolled in PUB253 completed a compulsory entrance survey during Week 1 until Week 5 and an exit survey during Weeks 13 until Week 17 of the semester. The survey consisted of 10 items measuring student competencies, including interpersonal communication, communication skills, team work and leadership. Data collection was conducted during lecture sessions using uFuture, UiTM's learning management system. All responses were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS software to examine changes in student competencies over the course.

Research Population and Sampling

The research population comprised Semester 4 Diploma in Communication and Media students enrolled in PUB253 at UiTM Melaka and UiTM Negeri Sembilan during the 20242 and 20252 academic session. A total of 234 students participated for 2042 session and 458 students participated for 20252 session, representing two campuses. The entrance and exit survey was administered to all students, while rubric-based evaluations were conducted by course instructors during key assessment activities. The inclusion of two campuses allowed for comparative insights and enhanced the generalizability of the findings.

Instruments

Two instruments were employed in this study:

1. **Entrance–Exit Survey:** A structured questionnaire consisting of 10 items across four competencies. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very weak) to 5 (excellent).
2. **Rubric-based Evaluation:** A standardized rubric was developed to assess student performance in interpersonal communication, presentation delivery, group publishing projects, and booth exhibitions. Each domain was scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with descriptors ensuring consistency across evaluators.

Both instruments were validated through expert review by faculty members specializing in communication and instructional innovation. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with values exceeding 0.70 considered acceptable for educational research.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and effect size calculations to determine the magnitude of competency gains. Rubric scores were analyzed to identify performance trends across domains. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between survey gains and rubric scores, thereby validating the alignment between student perceptions and observed outcomes. Comparative analysis between UiTM Melaka and UiTM Negeri Sembilan cohorts was also performed to assess replicability across campuses.

RESULTS**Entrance–Exit Survey Findings**

The entrance–exit survey revealed significant expansions in student competencies across interpersonal communication, communication, leadership, and teamwork domains. At the beginning of the semester, mean scores ranged between 1.23 and 1.24, indicating low self-perceived competency levels. By the end of the semester, mean scores increased to between 4.70 and 4.74, reflecting gains of more than +3.45 points on a 5-point scale. These results demonstrate significant growth in student confidence and perceived ability after the sessions with book publishing industry player exposure manage by the lecturer.

Table 1 : Entrance–Exit Survey Mean Scores

Domain	Entrance Mean	Exit Mean	Gain (+)
Interpersonal communication	1.23	4.70	+3.47
Communication	1.24	4.74	+3.50
Leadership	1.23	4.71	+3.48
Teamwork	1.24	4.73	+3.49

Rubric-Based Evaluation

Rubric-based evaluations conducted during presentations, group publishing projects, and booth exhibitions corroborated the survey findings. Students consistently achieved scores above 4.2 across all domains, with particularly strong performance in leadership-driven tasks such as collaboration, creativity, and booth organization. These results confirm that instructional innovation and authentic assessment translated into observable competency gains.

Table 2 : Rubric-Based Evaluation Scores

Domain	Mean Score
Interpersonal communication	4.25
Communication	4.32
Leadership	4.28
Teamwork	4.30

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between survey gains and rubric scores. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$) was found, indicating that improvements in self-perceived competencies were closely aligned with observed performance outcomes. This finding validates the reliability of using entrance–exit surveys alongside rubric-based evaluations to measure student learning outcomes.

Comparative Insights Across Campuses

Analysis of data from UiTM Melaka and UiTM Negeri Sembilan revealed similar growth patterns across both cohorts. Entrance–exit survey gains and rubric scores were consistent across campuses, demonstrating the replicability of instructional innovation and authentic assessment in diverse institutional contexts. This strengthens the generalizability of the findings and highlights the scalability of the PUB253 teaching model.

This section presents the comparative analysis of PUB253 student competency development across two campuses (UiTM Melaka and UiTM Negeri Sembilan) and two cohorts (20242 and 20252). Data are reported as average ratings (1–5 scale) for communication, presentation, leadership, and teamwork domains.

Table 3 : UiTM Melaka: Cohort 20242

Domain	Entry Avg	Exit Avg	Gain
Interpersonal communication	1.02	4.72	+3.70
Communication	1.03	4.64	+3.61
Leadership	1.05	4.72	+3.67
Teamwork	1.04	4.70	+3.66

The UiTM Melaka Cohort 20242 results highlight a dramatic transformation in student competencies through PUB253. Initial entry scores in communication (1.02), presentation (1.03), leadership (1.05), and teamwork (1.04) reflected very low confidence, yet exit scores rose to around 4.7 in all domains, with gains between +3.61 and +3.70. This consistent improvement demonstrates the effectiveness of PUB253's industry-linked pedagogy, integrating publisher engagement, book development, and booth exhibitions as authentic learning experiences. Balanced gains across domains confirm holistic development, with communication showing the highest increase (+3.70). The model proves scalable, fostering mastery and institutional relevance in diploma-level education. UiTM Melaka: Cohort 20252.

Table 4 : UiTM Melaka: Cohort 20252

Domain	Entry Avg	Exit Avg	Gain
Interpersonal communication	1.21	4.73	+3.52
Communication	1.25	4.79	+3.54
Leadership	1.24	4.76	+3.52
Teamwork	1.22	4.71	+3.49

The UiTM Melaka Cohort 20252 results demonstrate significant growth in student competencies through PUB253's teaching innovation. Entry scores in communication (1.21), presentation (1.25), leadership (1.24), and teamwork (1.22) reflected modest confidence, yet exit scores surged to 4.71–4.79, showing strong mastery across all domains. Gains of +3.49 to +3.54 highlight holistic development, with presentation achieving the highest improvement (+3.54), influenced by booth exhibitions and public-facing tasks. Although slightly lower than the 20242 cohort, outcomes remain equally strong, confirming that experiential, industry-linked pedagogy benefits students regardless of starting point. Consistent exit scores affirm the model's scalability, reliability, and sustained impact. UiTM Negeri Sembilan: Cohort 20242

Table 5 : UiTM Negeri Sembilan : Cohort 20242

Domain	Entry Avg	Exit Avg	Gain
Interpersonal communication	1.06	4.71	+3.65
Communication	1.12	4.70	+3.58
Leadership	1.07	4.76	+3.69
Teamwork	1.09	4.72	+3.63

The UiTM Negeri Sembilan Cohort 20242 results highlight strong competency development through PUB253's teaching innovation. Entry scores ranged from 1.06 to 1.12, reflecting slightly higher initial confidence than the Melaka 20242 cohort. Gains of +3.58 to +3.69 across communication, presentation, leadership, and teamwork demonstrate consistent improvement, with exit scores converging around 4.7 to indicate mastery. Leadership showed the highest gain (+3.69), underscoring the impact of booth exhibitions and team-based publishing tasks. Balanced growth across domains confirms the holistic nature of the instructional model.

UiTM Negeri Sembilan: 20242

Table 6 : UiTM Negeri Sembilan : Cohort 20242

Domain	Entry Avg	Exit Avg	Gain
Interpersonal communication	1.21	4.73	+3.52
Communication	1.26	4.72	+3.46
Leadership	1.24	4.75	+3.51
Teamwork	1.22	4.73	+3.51

The UiTM Negeri Sembilan Cohort 20252 results demonstrate consistent competency development through PUB253's instructional innovation. Entry scores ranged from 1.21 to 1.26, reflecting moderate confidence, while exit scores rose to 4.71–4.75, showing mastery in communication, presentation, leadership, and teamwork. Average gains of +3.5 were slightly lower than the 20242 cohort, aligning with the trend that students with lower initial confidence achieve greater relative improvement. Presentation recorded the highest gain (+3.54), highlighting the impact of booth exhibitions and public-facing tasks. Balanced growth across domains confirms the holistic nature of the model, validating its scalability, institutional relevance, and benchmarking potential.

Cross-Campus Comparison

Comparative results across UiTM Melaka and UiTM Negeri Sembilan cohorts confirm the pedagogical strength of PUB253's instructional innovation. Entry scores varied slightly, with Cohort 20242 showing lower baseline confidence (~1.0–1.1) than Cohort 20252 (~1.2). Despite these differences, all cohorts achieved exit scores around 4.7, reflecting mastery in communication, presentation, leadership, and teamwork. Gains were marginally higher in Cohort 20242 (+3.6) than Cohort 20252 (+3.5), suggesting underconfident learners benefit most from experiential, industry-linked pedagogy. Consistent outcomes across campuses and semesters affirm PUB253's scalability, while balanced gains across domains highlight its holistic design, supporting institutional benchmarking and broader adoption.

DISCUSSION

Managerial Implications: UiTM Curriculum Review and Leadership Decisions

The transformation of PUB253 was not only pedagogical but also managerial, enabled by UiTM's **Curriculum Review Policy** and the adoption of the **HETVET@UiTM model** (UiTM, 2021). The policy requires all programs to undergo systematic review every 3 to 5 years, ensuring alignment with MOHE's Education Blueprint and MQA's Malaysian Qualifications Framework. Leadership decisions at UiTM under Academic Assessment and Evaluation Division, Department of Academic and International emphasized **industry collaboration, digitalization of assignments, and constructive alignment of learning outcomes**, directly addressing Malaysia's challenges in embedding Education 4.0 principles.

PUB253's redesign illustrates how **curriculum governance mobilized resources and partnerships**: faculty leaders allocated funding and logistical support for book exhibitions, established collaborations with Prestasi Publication and Pelangi Publishing, and invested in staff development to strengthen instructional innovation. These managerial actions operationalized the HETVET@UiTM directive to enhance graduate employability through industry-linked pedagogy.

From an educational management perspective, PUB253 demonstrates how UiTM's leadership translated national policy into institutional practice. The replication of the course at UiTM Negeri Sembilan highlights scalability, reinforcing the role of benchmarking in

sustaining innovation across campuses. By embedding industry collaboration and digital innovation into curriculum review processes, UiTM positioned PUB253 as a replicable model of **curriculum management and institutional leadership**, aligning with restructuring and strengthening MQF learning outcomes; and restructuring, strengthening Malaysia Qualification Framework learning outcomes; and integrating Skills Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia.

Policy Alignment with MOHE and MQA

The competency gains achieved in PUB253 directly fulfill the Ministry of Higher Education's (MOHE) employability agenda, which under Education 4.0/5.0 emphasizes resilience, adaptability, and workplace readiness. The dramatic improvements recorded across communication, leadership, teamwork, and presentation domains illustrate how UiTM's curriculum reform operationalizes these national priorities. Students entered PUB253 with low baseline confidence, yet consistently exited with scores above 4.7, demonstrating measurable growth in transversal skills that MOHE identifies as critical for graduate employability. These outcomes also align with the Malaysian Qualifications Agency's (MQA) 11 graduate competency domains, particularly communication skills, social responsibility, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, leadership, teamwork, and digital fluency. By embedding industry collaboration, authentic assessment, and commercialization pathways into coursework, PUB253 validates MQA's holistic framework for graduate attributes. Importantly, the replication of results across campuses confirms scalability and institutional benchmarking, reinforcing UiTM's role in translating national policy into practice. PUB253 therefore stands as a model of curriculum management that not only enhances student achievement but also demonstrates compliance with MOHE and MQA directives, positioning diploma-level graduates as industry-ready professionals capable of thriving in Malaysia's dynamic higher education and employment landscape.

First Industry Collaboration

Cohort 20242 marked the first introduction of industry collaboration into PUB253, with academicians assuming the role of industry players. Students entered with extremely low confidence, averaging ~1.0 across domains. Exit scores converged at ~4.7, with gains of +3.6 to +3.7. UiTM Melaka students showed the highest improvement in communication (+3.70), while UiTM Negeri Sembilan students excelled in leadership (+3.69).

This dramatic transformation illustrates the power of authentic learning environments. According to **Rahman et al. (2021)**, experiential learning models significantly enhance student self-efficacy, particularly in contexts where learners initially perceive themselves as underprepared. The PUB253 results align with this, demonstrating that simulated industry collaboration catalyzed confidence and competency growth. Moreover, **Nguyen & Tran (2022)** emphasize that industry-linked pedagogy fosters transferable skills by situating learning within real-world tasks, a principle clearly validated in Cohort 20242 outcomes.

Critically, the reliance on academicians as industry players provided a controlled simulation. While effective in building confidence, it lacked the unpredictability and commercial realities of genuine industry engagement. Nevertheless, the results confirm that even simulated collaboration can transform learner trajectories, particularly for students with low baseline confidence.

Expanded Industry Collaboration

Cohort 20252 advanced the model by inviting managers and founders from publishing companies, thereby introducing genuine industry dynamics and commercialization

opportunities. Entry scores were slightly higher (~1.2), reflecting modestly greater baseline confidence. Exit scores again converged at ~4.7, with gains averaging +3.5. UiTM Melaka students recorded the highest improvement in presentation (+3.54), while UiTM Negeri Sembilan students demonstrated balanced gains across domains.

The involvement of industry leaders introduced new dimensions of authenticity. Students were not only simulating production but actively engaging with professionals whose decisions carried commercial implications. This aligns with **Ali & Hussin (2023)**, who argue that industry collaboration in higher education enhances employability by exposing students to professional standards and expectations. Furthermore, **Zhang et al. (2024)** highlight that commercialization opportunities within academic projects bridge the gap between classroom learning and entrepreneurial practice, fostering innovation and sustainability.

Beyond the Classroom Walls: Embedding Industry Practice in Higher Education

For over two decades, PUB253 relied on static assignments that lacked pedagogical review and industry relevance, culminating in the highest failure rate among courses in UiTM Melaka's Diploma Komunikasi dan Media program. This crisis prompted faculty to consult publishing industry professionals, leading to a strategic overhaul of teaching and assessment practices. The revised model introduced production-based assignments where students created interactive digital children's books, supported by field trips to publishing houses and interviews with editors, designers, and marketing teams. These authentic experiences tested communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, replacing passive instruction with immersive industry engagement. Students also collaborated with authors and illustrators, simulating professional publishing workflows. This transformation reflects scholarship on the limitations of conventional pedagogy (Brown & Lee, 2021) and affirms that industry collaboration fosters deeper learning, curriculum relevance, and entrepreneurial thinking (Martinez et al., 2022; Chong & Abdullah, 2023). Commercialization further enhanced motivation and institutional impact (Wang et al., 2025). PUB253 now consistently produces top achievers, affirming the necessity of industry-informed pedagogy.

CRITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Pedagogical Impact

For over two decades, PUB253 relied on static assignments lacking industry relevance, culminating in the highest failure rate within UiTM Melaka's Diploma Komunikasi dan Media program. In response, faculty collaborated with publishing professionals to redesign pedagogy and assessment, introducing production-based tasks such as interactive digital children's books. Students engaged in field trips, interviews, and collaborative projects with editors, designers, and authors, fostering communication, teamwork, and leadership in authentic contexts. This reform reflects scholarship on the limits of conventional pedagogy (Brown & Lee, 2021) and affirms that industry collaboration enhances learning, relevance, and entrepreneurial skills (Martinez et al., 2022; Chong & Abdullah, 2023; Wang et al., 2025).

Commercialization

The transition from simulated to real industry collaboration in PUB253, particularly evident in Cohort 20252, marks a significant pedagogical advancement. By involving publishing managers and founders directly in the course, students moved from hypothetical production scenarios to authentic engagement with commercial publishing processes. This shift introduced new dimensions of sustainability, relevance, and entrepreneurial thinking into the curriculum.

As highlighted by Zhang et al. (2024), commercialization serves as a bridge between academic learning and entrepreneurial practice, fostering innovation and real-world impact.

Recent studies affirm that embedding commercialization within academic projects enhances student motivation, deepens learning, and aligns educational outputs with industry expectations (Ali & Hussin, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). In PUB253, the opportunity to publish and market digital children's books not only validated student competencies but also created tangible pathways for industry-academia partnerships. This approach reflects a growing emphasis on innovation ecosystems in higher education, where production-based learning is integrated with market-driven outcomes (Chong & Abdullah, 2023; Martinez et al., 2022). The commercialization component thus elevates PUB253 beyond traditional coursework, positioning it as a model for sustainable, scalable, and industry-relevant teaching innovation.

Excitement and Power of Industry Collaboration

The PUB253 results are not merely incremental improvements; they represent a pedagogical leap. Students entered with minimal confidence and exited as competent communicators, presenters, leaders, and team players. This transformation was catalyzed by industry collaboration, which provided authenticity, accountability, and commercial relevance.

Industry collaboration is not an optional enhancement and it is a necessity for technical subjects demanding production outputs. Conventional pedagogy cannot replicate the pressures, standards, and opportunities of real industry engagement. PUB253 proves that when education mirrors the real world, students do not just learn that they evolve. This aligns with **Ali & Hussin (2023)**, who emphasize that industry collaboration enhances employability, and **Wang et al. (2025)**, who highlight the motivational power of commercialization.

The excitement lies in the scalability and replicability of the model. PUB253 has demonstrated consistent outcomes across campuses and cohorts, proving that industry collaboration can be institutionalized as a benchmark for teaching innovation. This positions UiTM as a leader in pedagogical transformation, aligning academic outputs with market realities and advancing institutional impact.

Practical Recommendations

The success of PUB253 offers actionable lessons for curriculum managers and academic leaders seeking to embed industry collaboration into diploma-level education. First, institutions should **formalize industry partnerships** through curriculum review processes, ensuring that authentic tasks and commercialization pathways are systematically integrated rather than ad hoc. Second, **resource allocation** must prioritize experiential learning activities, such as exhibitions, field trips, and collaborative projects, which provide students with direct exposure to professional standards. Third, **staff development** is essential; lecturers should be trained to facilitate industry-linked pedagogy and to align assessment with MQA's graduate attributes. Fourth, institutions should establish **benchmarking mechanisms** across campuses to monitor competency gains and replicate successful models. Finally, curriculum committees should align reforms with **MOHE's Education 4.0/5.0 agenda**, emphasizing digitalisation, employability, and resilience. By adopting these strategies, higher education institutions can sustain innovation, enhance graduate readiness, and strengthen their credibility within Malaysia's evolving education landscape.

CONCLUSION

The review of PUB253 from a course with the highest failure rate to one of the most celebrated within UiTM Melaka demonstrates the strategic impact of curriculum governance in sustaining pedagogical innovation through curriculum review policy. By embedding industry

collaboration and authentic assessment into coursework, PUB253 operationalized UiTM's **Curriculum Review Policy** and the **HETVET@UiTM model**, ensuring that reforms were not sporadic but institutionalized. This governance framework empowered faculty leaders to mobilize resources and found industry partnerships, thereby aligning teaching innovation with UiTM's broader mission of producing resilient and industry-ready graduates. Finally, PUB253 stands as a replicable model of **curriculum management and institutional leadership**, demonstrating how governance structures can translate national policy into measurable student outcomes. Its success underscores the managerial importance of aligning pedagogy with industry realities, ensuring that Malaysian higher education remains competitive, relevant, and responsive to the demands of the creative economy and Industry 4.0.

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