Critical Digital Pedagogy: Alternative Ways of Cultivating Critical Consciousness on Religious and Ecological Issues

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Abstract: This study aims to examine to what extent digital learning through documentary films contribute to instill students' critical consiousness and inclusive understanding on ecological crisis and religious issues. The Mixed Method is employed in this study in which data are collected through observations, participative interviews, and questioners. As research participants, it involves 61 English Education students (the second semester in the year of 2024/2025) of Raden Intan Lampung of State Islamic University (UIN RIL). During one semester of following the lecture of "Islam and Environment", they are provided the 10 selected documentary films that must be watched, analyzed, and wrote the idea of film into short essay. This study shows that students seems interested and enthusiastic in learning process and, in the broader sense, learning via films can enhance students' sensitivity, new knowledge, self-awareness. This study also points out that as many as 78.7% of participants agree that political interests, uncertainty of laws, and inequal relation between human and nature are the roots of natural damage. Then, more than 80% of students (very) agree that all religions are responsible for preserving nature, not solely limited to certain religion. Related to the existence of indigenous communities, 54.1% of students very agree that they should be protected and not stigmatized and discriminated. Thus, this study concludes that digital pedagogy through documentary films can be alternative to instill students' critical consciousness and inclusive religious understanding on the ecological issues.

INTRODUCTION

Global society today is facing a new era or what the so-called "Industrial Revolution 5.0" signified by massive advances of digital technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI). In this era, human lives are invariably, even inseparably, connected to the technological devices (Maddikunta, 2022). It certainly brings up opportunity as well as challenge. On one hand, the progress of technology can, in fact, ease people's activities more effectively. However, on the other hand, when people have no ability to maximaze and control it appropriately, it will endanger them and causes huge damage. One of the salient example is the presence of Artificial Intelligence which potentially can replace people roles in work sectors in the future (Fukuyama, 2020).

Radical changes as the direct impacts of digital revolution are also undoubtedly faced by educational institutions, particularly after the explosive spread of COVID-19 in the recent years.

Educational curriculum, including learning materials, methods and strategies, which were prior to offline-based or face-to-face in the class, has to move online or digital-based. The teaching and learning process should be carried out entirely online from home or well-known as Learning From Home (LFH) through platforms of technological devices such as Zoom Meeting, Google Classroom, and Google Meet (Florio-Hansen, 2018).

The access on technology is, in fact, very helpful in the learning process during the pandemic when it is not possible to meet face-to-face offline in the class. However, it still rests on a big question to what extent of the effectiveness of learning outcomes are achieved by utilizing such virtual devices. It is necessary to note that technological tools have indeed provided benefits to the learning and teaching process. Nevertheless, a bunch of studies has pointed out that the virtual learning is negatively correlated with learning outcomes (Chou, 2021) low student interests in participating in learning process (Moh. Muzammil, 2021) learning effectiveness not running optimally (Kelli A. Bird, 2022) students' attitudes and behaviors not sensitive to their social circumstance, as well as triggering mental and psychological disorders to both students and teachers (David Nkengbeza, 2020).

Although virtual learning denotes manifold weaknesses as shown by the above studies, the use of technology in the learning process cannot be eliminated. Instead, it has been a necessity that plays an important role in the future. Hence, the real challenge is not about how to minimize the dependency on technology for the sake of avoiding its downside, but rather on how we worthly utilize it in order corresponding to the learning objectives. This study thus focuses on the use of digital platforms such as documentary films that serve as a means to instill students' critical consciousness and inclusive religious understanding toward the ecological issues.

To examine such objectives, the 10 selected documentary films by the varied themes about widely environmental issues are provided and must be gradually watched, analyzed, and written in short essay by students. The process of this research is integral part of the lecture of "Islam and Environment *(Islam dan Lingkungan Hidup)*" that we handle during one semester (Year of 2024/2025). It is a mandatory lecture that must be followed by each student of UIN RIL. As the learning method, we use the technology-based learning by utilizing documentary films that definitely have been adjusted with the determined sylabus.

Research related to Critical Digital Pedagogy has previously been researched by (Marwa Mohammad Masood, 2021), this research explains that this paper outlines the key literature studies on CDP and briefly highlights some core concepts of CP and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. CDP, as mentioned by its principal advocates, cannot be defined or interpreted by individual researchers or practitioners alone. In the same way, there cannot be one principal model or a set of standardized practices in CDP as it is against Freire's philosophy of establishing and empowering and dialogic pedagogy. The role of technology and the choice of digital tools also depend on a number of factors and the practices that worked in one context are mostly unlikely to work in others. Therefore, it is necessary for practitioners and researchers to take these cultural, demographic and contextual factors into account to gain a proper understanding of the affordances and limitations of CDP in their individual contexts. Other research was also conducted by (Daniel Gutiérrez-Ujaque, 2024), this article is about towards a critical digital literacy and consciousness in higher education: the emancipatory role of critical digital pedagogy. The review highlights the importance of critical digital literacy in enhancing analytical skills, fostering critical data comprehension, and promoting digital inclusion. It advocates for transformative changes in educational practices and the adoption of innovative, technology-based methodologies that foster critical consciousness. Finally, the article proposes six CDP-based actions for HE, addressing themes like emotional support, digital ethics, and digital activism.

This article's analytical gap is different from the research studies above, the novelty of this this study much develop the concept of Critical Digital Pedagogy (CDP) as formulated by Lucy Lunevich. The paradigm of CDP emphasizes on the learning process that not only makes use of the devices of digital technology as learning resources, but also seeks to instill students' critical

awareness. (Critical) self-awareness in this regard is a key element in CDP (Lunevich, 2022). The philosophical basis of CDP leans on a view that technological access can be transformed into the effective means to achieve educational goals, regardless of its negative excesses. CDP allows educational institutions to accept new knowledge productions and constructive changes; more stressing on collaborative than individual learning; and prioritizing the development of interdisciplinary rather than dichotomous learning. In addition to that, CDP also presupposes that the learning and teaching activity carried out virtually requires the new skills such as digital communication, management and self-discipline, and an independent learning style in which students are posited as subjects (Dharamshi, 2020). In other words, CDP more considers technological products as a blessing rather than a disaster for the world of education.

METHOD

As the research method, this study employs the Mixed Method. Conceptually, the Mixed Method is an approach that combines between qualitative and quantitative ways in collecting data in a research project. The main aim of the Mixed Method is to verify more comprehensive, reliable and objective data rather than using one approach, for instance, qualitative or quantitative only. There are two kinds of models developed in the Mixed Method: 1) the Sequential Model consists of the Sequential Explanatory (quantitative-qualitative) and the Sequential Exploratory (qualitative-quantitative); 2) Concurrent Model includes the Concurrent Embedded and the Concurrent Triangulation (Vicki, 2008).

Of all kinds of Mixed Method models, this study specifically uses the Sequential Exploratory in which in the beginning it makes use of qualitative approach, and it is then completed by quantitative approach. There are three steps in collecting data in this study referring to the Sequential Exploratory model: participative observation, deep interview, and questioner.

Participative observation was carried out after students finished watching a determined documentary film and wrote down the concern of film into short essay as many as 250 words. In the class, students re-discussed together about the film guided by the lecturer. The role of the lecturer in this sense ignites discussion by proposing some questions e.g what are main issues of the film talking about?; which is segment of the film is the most interesting, and why?; what is the critical message or moral values that have been delivered in the film? From such discussion, the lecturer can directly observe on how students problematized and dealt with ecological issues in the film. This is also fruitful to deeply know the stance of each student in addressing environmental crisis represented from the film.

No	Title of Films	Genre	Meeting
1.	Semesta	Documentary	2nd Meeting
2.	Princess Mononoke	Classical Anime	3rd Meeting
3.	Deforestasi Tanpa Henti & Ketika Hutan Indonesia Musnah		4th Meeting
4.	Sexy Killers	Documentary	5th Meeting
5.	Our Land is the Sea	Documentary	6th Meeting
6.	Tanah Ibu Kami	Documentary	7th Meeting
7.	The Indigenous	Documentary	9th Meeting
8.	Tanah Moyangku	Documentary	10th Meeting
9.	Sapu Hutan	Documentary	11th Meeting
10.	Menyisir Pesisir Gili Ketapang	Documentary	12th Meeting

Figure 1 : the List of Films used in the lecture of Islam and Environment

Deep interview is useful to delve deeply whether the documentary films that have been provided bring about significant changes for students both their world view and attitude. This step was held after students finished watching whole films (10 films in total). Through deep interview, the researcher can identify to what extent such films are able to influence students's outlook, understanding, and attitude in addresing crucial issues on environmental crisis. The

researcher also can compare the changes of students' view, understanding, and attitude about the ecological issues between before and after watching the films. The last step in collecting data in this study is through a questioner that consists of 10 primary questions. It is to ensure the salient changes of students as the impacts of films that have been watched. The set of questions in the questioner is designed and formulated by taking into consideration of dynamic discussion about the issues of ecological crisis and how religions contribute to solve it.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Learning via Film: from Sensitivity to New Awareness
Based on the results of interviews and questionnaires, the majority of students showed their enthusiasm and positive trends regarding digital-based learnings through the selected documentary films. Unlike the lecture commonly carried out using conventional and monotonous methods, through these documentary films, students seemingly involve and directly witness natural damages that take place, particularly in Indonesia. The narratives voiced in the film to problematize the adverse impacts of environmental damage are able to arouse students' sympathy and empathy. This is, for instance, experienced by Nur'aini who says:

> "All the films I watched showed unique aspects, interesting, and sometimes miserable. Of all these, the most film I like is *Tanah Ibu Kami* (Our Mother's Land)". This film was so extraordinary, I even cried, I could not bear to see the struggle of mothers who, even had to sacrifice their lives, defend the land of their birth; the land where they lived and earned a living was forcibly taken by the authority to build a cement factory. I was so sad to see that. However, I also feel proud that women, often considered as weak creatures, are actually able to struggle for defending their own land." (Nur'aini, 2024)

Like Nur'aini, most other female respondents in this study also states that "*Tanah Ibu Kami*" is one of their favorite films. It is certainly natural considering that the film tells about the story of the struggle of women in Pati, Central Java, who are fighting against land grabbing for the benefit of a cement industry. For women there, land is like a mother whom its existence is extremely meaningful. Allowing the cement factory to stand would be tantamount to killing their source of life. The sadness and despair experienced by those women in fact are able to successfully touch students' sensitivity (particularly female) to share empathy and solidarity as fellow women.

Apart from growing sensitivity and empathy, after watching the series of documentaries, students also admitted that they have gained new knowledge and self-awareness about the ecological damage, the factors causing it, and even the individuals involved in it. The global issues such as natural exploitation and deforestation are very complex, involving myriad interests. Nature and all its inhabitants (plants, animals, and including humans as well) are indeed the victims of humans' greed. Nature is regarded as the dominated object whose existence is solely to satisfy humans' needs. This kinds of anxiety was further expressed by Irena Azzahra Ridwan:

> "I got a lot of new information after watching the films. I just know that coal, natural gas or oil mining has a big impact on natural and environmental damage. I think such mining activities are safe and have no negative effects. However, it has led not only natural destruction, but also disadvantages for people as clearly shown in the film "Sexy Killer". Many children drowned and died in ex-mining excavations, people contracted respiratory disease due to mining pollution, water and land were disturbed, threatening society's life. What is even sadder is that the mine owners are the state officials we often see on TV or social media." (Ridwan, 2024).

From the statement above, Irena realized that mining products such as gas and oil which are commonly used in daily life actually have the huge costs, including the destruction of forests, the extinction of plants and animals, and loss of people's life. As said by Irena, this new knowledge was obtained after watching the film "Sexy Killers". This documentary film, which raises issues based on true stories, increasingly adds to Irena's belief that, if not obeying the laws, mining

activities will be detrimental to nature and humans themselves. From the film, Irena also understands that the actors, in the behind of the environmental damage that persistently takes place in Indonesia, are the state officials who frequently appear in TV or social media. This information certainly makes Irena conscious that the ecological crisis is also evoked by political interests of certain parties that are merely based on profit-oriented. In doing so, Irena's new knowledge and understanding actually correspond to the ways in which the other respondents address the issues of ecological crisis. More than 49% of respondents very agree and 47.5% agree that instant political interests and uncertainty of laws are the crucial factors of natural damage.

Figure 2 : the Crucial Factors of Natural Damage

The embedding of new knowledge and understanding can gradually foster Students' self-consciousness within which it presupposes inner comprehension. Hence, It is worth noting that the meaning of students' self-consciousness in this context is to have the holistic perspective regarding the factors that cause natural damage and what steps should be taken to minimize its destructive impacts. It is accordance with Riko Adytia Mubarok's opinion:

> At first, I didn't care about natural damage or forest exploitation. But, after I watched the documentary films, my indifference gradually changed. There are many surprising things in the films that never cross in my mind. "Semesta" is the most impressive film for me. In that film, the forest is very crucial for a tribe such as the Dayak Iban in Kalimantan. For them, "the forest is our supermarket", "the land is our mother", and "water is our blood". This means when forests, land and water are destroyed, life subsequently will end for the Dayak Iban. Here I realized that our relationship with nature is interdependent (Mubarok, 2024).

From Riko's notion, it indicates that the selected documentary films have played pivotal roles in instilling self-consciousness regarding the necessity to posit nature and all its inhabitants as important entities that must be treated equally as humans wish to be treated. Riko's self-consciousness was awakened when he watched film "Semesta" and discovered how central the position of forest, land and water is for the tribe of Dayak Iban in Kalimantan. The akin outlook is also revealed by Luzana Riyanti:

> "Honestly I dont understand what natural damage means. I only know the saster such as flood caused by littering or cutting trees in the forest. But, I just realize that the factors causing such natural disasters are not only those. In the film *"Ketika Hutan Indonesia Musnah"* and *"Deforestasi Tanpa Henti"*, I clearly get information that in one minute Indonesia has lost its forests the size of a football field. I cant imagine how many trees in the forests will lose during a year. As following impacts, animals and plants also of

course will be extinct. This natural damage is conducted mostly for industrial interests and mining. This is actually becomes the roots of natural disaster such flood. From that film, I am aware that to protect our nature a good intention is not enough. We need more commitment to respect nature and also need the state's strict legislation to prevent such deforestation." (Riyanti, 2024).

Luzana's notion increasingly confirms that the more new knowledge increases, the more embedded self-consciousness becomes. Similar to Riko's experience, Luzana has broader perspective in addressing the ecological issues. She believes that seeking the main roots of exploisive natural disaster is complex. It is not merely about littering rubish, but involving wider factors such as deforestation for industrial and mining interests. For Luzana, to deal with such environmental crisis, we require more than a good intention in which the enforcement of state's regulation and cooperation with all stakeholders are very necessary as well.

Figure 3 : the Ways to Deal with Natural Destruction

The raise of self-consciousness is manifested by the other students who participate in this study. As shown by the Charts above, as many as 57.4% of students "very agree" and 37.7% "agree" that the forests and all its inhabitants must be respected and treated equally as humans do. Meanwhile, 73.8% of students "very agree" and 24.6% "agree" that the cooperation of all stakeholders such as the state, religious figures, and society are indispensable to overcome the problems of ecological crisis. This trend indicates that new knowledge gained after watching documentary films forms students' self consciousness. It also corresponds with the concepts of CDP as contended by Lucy Lunevich that the self-consciousness is embedded when one directly feels and experiences the reality what exactly occurs in the field (Lunevich, 2022).

Inclusive (Religious) Understanding

In addition to raising students' sensitivity, new knowledge and self-consciousness, the digital learning via documentary films is also able to instill the inclusive religious understanding among students. Both conceptually and practically, the discourse about relationship between religion and nature is sometimes overlapping and ambiguous. In the one side, some believe that the ongoing destruction of nature is a sign of the absence of religion. Natural damage is a reflection of the failure of religion as a source of moral guidance to preserve nature. However, on the other side, the others instead argue that natural damage is the result of ignoring religious values in managing nature. Religion is deemed unimportant and has nothing to do with nature.

Apart from the debate above, however, based on the results of observations, interviews and questionnaires, it shows that the documentary films can be an effective means of instilling an inclusive religious understanding among respondents. This, for example, is in line with the statement expressed by Azzahra Tusalma:

The documentaries that I have watched have made me increasingly aware of our role as God's caliphs on the earth. In the film "Semesta", I obviously see that religion can be one of the best solution to natural destruction. I believe that all religions suggest their adherents to preserve nature, and forbid to harm it. As in the film "Semesta", religious figures from Islam, Hindu, Christian and local religion can take the real actions, albeit in small capacity, to deal with natural damage with their own ways. This fact proves that solving environmental problems should become the obligation of all religions regardless of their names (R. Adytia Mubarok, personal communication, May 30, 2024).

The recognition that the preserving nature is the obligation for all religions, as stated by Azzahra, indicates an inclusive perspective. The important point here is not which religion is true and which is deviant, but rather the extent to which the religions can actively contribute to solving environmental problems. As the moral guidance, religious teachings should be a source of reference for people to think, behave, and act that are not opposite with God's rules to not exploit nature arbitrarily.

Figure 4: the Obligation of Religions to Preserve Nature

Azzahra's point of view is also concomitant with the view of the majority of respondents as shown in the Figure 4 in which 78.7% of them "very agree" and 21.3% "agree" that the obligation to preserve nature is not solely a duty of Islam, but all religions as well. Afterward, as many as 52.5% of students "very disagree" and 32.8% "disagree" people exploit nature haphazardly albeit in the name of people's welfare because, according to most respondents, such act is opposite to God's provision in which people serve as God's caliphate in the earth. Natural crisis as the effects of humans greed are thus against with God's laws.

The inclusive religious understanding also can be observed from significant changesof respondents' perspectives regarding the existence of indigenous communities and their roles in preserving nature. As generally known, indigenous peoples closely live and completely depend on the nature for fulfilling their necessity. However, they in fact are often stigmatized as primitive, savage, deviant, uncivilized and so on. As a result, they are expelled from their own lands and discriminated to obtain their civil rights as citizens. After watching the documentary films, this pejorative view among students surely changed. Farel Ammar Maulid witnesses that:

"As far as I know, indigenous peoples are uneducated, unclothed and unmodern. They live in the jungle where it is far from crowd. They are also infidel *(kafir)* because they put the offering *(sesajen)* under big tree or stone. It is clearly against with Islamic teaching. But, after I watched the films "Our Land is the Sea", *"Semesta"* and *"The Indigenous"*, my mind has changed. Indigenous communities such as Dayak Iban in Kalimantan, Daya Luhur in Cilacap and others have given real contribution on how to treat and preserve nature appropriately. They have their own rules to harmoniously live with nature and its inhabitants, including the spirits in the forest. Seeing their appreciation

and respect to nature so much, I actually wondered whether they were indeed modern and civilized, while we who destroy nature are uncivilized or primitive." (Maulid, 2024).

The initial perspective put forward by Farel is a reflection that there is a wrong perception on how we judge indigenous community. Even they are hazardly discriminated and stigmatized due to our fallacious perception. The films which have been watched by Farel have inspired him to change his notion toward the indigenous community. Directly seeing indigenous people live in and treat the forests, it then makes Farel hesitant and re-question, as stated by Farel, "whether they were indeed modern and civilized, while we who destroy nature are uncivilized or primitive". His hesitance basically ilustrates that negative stigma attached to the indigenous community is a part of ignorance and prejudice. The same view is also said by Eki Yana Wijayanti:

> "For me, the indigenous people are animist and deviant, so they need to be Islamized civilized because they live in the forest. But when I watched the films "Semesta" and " The Indigenous", I began to revise my opinion. I think what Dayak Iban tribe does in the kalimantan forest is the real actions to maintain balance between human and nature. As the example, there is a rule among them in which each family is merely allowed to cut down 3 trees in a year. They also prohibited to use poison to catch fish in the river or use machine gun to hunt animals. Maintaining harmony between human and nature are also practiced by Daya Luhur community in Cilacap. In certain moment, they carry out a ritual and put the offering in the big tree or stone. In fact, it aims not to worship to the trees of stones, but as the expression of thankfulness to supreme beings (Wijayanti, 2024).

Both Farel and Eki have positive outlooks after they closely know and recognize the indigenous community, understand how they maintain nature or hold certain rituals to keep in harmony. The shifting of paradigm to the existence of the indigenous community is also experienced by the other respondents as shown in the Chart 5 below.

Figure 5: the Change of Paradigm to the Indigenous Community

There are more than 54% of respondents that "very agree" and 44.3% "agree" that the indigenous community who depedently live in the forest must be protected due to their roles in preserving nature. As such, it is necessary to underscore that the changes of perspective and attitude toward the existence of indigenous community as shown by most respondents do not suddenly occur. Knowledge and the curiosity to know more are prerequisite for Inclusiveness. The inclusive understanding attests that they have enough knowledge about the indigenous community in which it is gained by them after watching and analyzing the films. Again, inclusive

view toward others who have different religious, ethnic, and cultural background reflects that there have been enough knowledge and self-consciousness among students.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that digital learning through documentary films about the environmental issues can potentially be an alternative medium in instilling students' sensitivity, new knowledge, self-consciousness, inclusive religious understanding. In this sense, sensitivity is manisfested by students when they straightly witness in the films many kinds of injustice, inequality and misery experienced by ordinary people as the victims of human's greed in exploiting nature. In the film *"Tanah Ibu Kami"*, for instance, most females respondents demonstrate their concerns on how women struggle and fight to defend their own lands from grabbing, in which even they have to sacrifice their life for it. Sensitivity (solidarity as well) is a part of natural expression as moral support as fellow women. Digital learning through documentary films also have awaken a new knowledge and self-consciousness among respondents. This new knowledge is represented in the form of new information related to the ecological issue in which some respondents were previously unfamiliar with such issues. They realize that deforestation, mining industry, and other forms of forest destructions are extremely complex and intricate. Albeit in the name of human's welfare, the practice of uncontrolled forest destructions has given rise to huge disasters. The respondents are even increasingly shocking after they know that the owners in the behind of those are the state officials who often perform in TV or social media. This new knowledge is gained when the respondents watched and analyzed the films such as "Sexy Killers", *"Ketika Hutan Indonesia Musnah"* and *"Deforestasi tanpa Henti di Indonesia".*

The new knowledge in regarding of natural damage and its roots of causes has become an essential resource for students' self-consciousness. In this context, the self consciousness means that students can elaborate what environmental crisis is; identify its factors, and subsequently offer a solution to deal with it. The articulation of self consciousness also can be comprehended as the way in which students realize that they have an obligation to preserve nature, albeit through simple manner such as not littering. In addition to it, the other salient character that can be observed is the rise of inclusive religious understanding. Inclusive world view particularly can be highlighted from the changes of paradigma toward the indigenous community and its real roles in preserving nature. At the outset, most students consider the indigenous community who dependently lives in the forests as primitive, infidel *(kafir)*, savage, or heretic *(sesat)* that need to be islamized. However, after watching and analyzing the films such as *"Semesta"*, "Ourland is the Sea", and "The Indigenous", such negative stigma and prejudice have slowly but surely changed. The data show that most students "very agree" (54.1%) and "agree" (44.3%) that the indigenous community should be protected due to its crucial roles in maintaining the balance of nature.

Although the findings of this study require further studies to re-examine whether students' sensitivity, new knowledge, self-consciousness, inclusive understanding are permanently embedded or merely a spontaneous emotion, however, this study has demonstrated that digital learning via wacthing (also followed by analyzing and writing) documentary films about themes of the broad ecological issues has in fact stimulated the changes of students' point of view and attitude toward the ecological issues to more consciously and critically.

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