

Research Article

Activities Reporting Template Usability Perceived by Academicians at Centre for Applied Management Studies, UiTM Pahang: The Inception of AReS (Activities Reporting System)

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Abstract: Activity reports are an organized type of workplace communication that outline the objectives and status of projects. In general, the report preparers must provide a written summary, organize the details, convey factual information and present supporting evidence such as images. The use of MS word template to log details is no longer efficient. Additionally, the conventional reporting approach is prone to mistakes and often puts pressure on the report preparers to be accurate. Along with redundant and inconsistent data entry, many preparers also tend to put off submission, which can occasionally result in no submission at all. Alternatively, it is strongly advised that all report preparers use the new AReS (Activities Reporting System) to aid in their report preparation. Not only AReS has reporting capabilities, it also offers menus for storing and checking reports, an analysis dashboard as well as app gallery. The usage of an electronic system rather than paper-based reporting methods, gives users the aspect of mobility because it is easily accessible, while its simplicity can boost efficiency in terms of cost and time. The administrator of this system is also able to retrieve the information and generate a more comprehensive and interesting report. This will improve reporting practices and promote effective and polished reports and encourage the use of electronic documents in a greener environment which improves work productivity. All parties who are involved in the preparation of activities/programs reports, including public and private businesses can gain benefit from AReS.

Keywords: activities; programs; online reporting



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1. INTRODUCTION

Reporting has been a general practice for many years in many organizations. Higher education institutions often manage lots of activities and programs for both their students and academic staff. Sports, field trips, seminars, workshops, academic training, social gatherings, volunteer works and community services are a few of these. At the end of the activities/programs, the organizers or person in charge are responsible for compiling a complete report. The report should consist of all pertinent details regarding the activity/program including its objective, overall background of the event and

generally ends with conclusion. In general, all reporting needs several evidences such as images/photographs of the activities and other documentations such as feedback form or participant's list.

Labyntsev et al. (2018) define corporate reporting as a set of reports containing fairly complete information on the results of the organization's activities, prospective plans for its development, allowing holding a dialogue with stakeholders, and strengthening their trust. When talking about writing for and sharing reports with others, the content and nature of what people choose to include and share may vary depending on the audience and intended purpose of the report (Lu et al., 2018). The report should enable the third party to understand precisely what is happening in the activities/programs. The report should be transparently written, concise and highlight necessary details. Some activities report also need to include suggestions and areas for improvement. A survey about management reports performed by Deloitte (2016) found out that 50% of managers are unsatisfied with the speed of delivery and the quality for the reports they receive. Therefore, the reports should be prepared with a clear purpose and all relevant information should not only have presented, but also analyzed. This will allow the management to monitor the committee progress, identify any potential issues and assess how well the committee manage the activity/program.

Any organization needs to have a strong visibility to attract stakeholders especially their customer. In conjunction to the arising needs during pandemic, reports generation in the year of 2020 gave high level of information about company's services, and their reorganization as well as the income received, cost occur and the performance of annual objectives achievement (Aversano et al. 2023). This has shown the importance of having a proper report to help the company show its visibility through the help of documented activities from reporting. By having a proper reporting system, it helps company to move way forward and attract future customer from its competitor.

In higher education such as UiTM Pahang, committee report generally is prepared using MS Word and later this document is forwarded to the management in hard copies (printed) or via various platforms such as email or shared drives. Center of Applied Management Studies or better known as *Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Gunaan (PPPG)*, is one of the departments in the Faculty of Business and Management. This department is also responsible to prepare the activity/program reporting. Given that there are currently 20 committees being established in PPPG, activity/program reporting can be seen as a difficult and time-consuming process for the person in charge. Thus, it is increasingly important for the department to produce reports quickly and accurately. Hence, these are the purposes of this study:

1. To assess the usability of activities reporting template in PPPG, UiTM Pahang
2. To recommend better approach of preparing activity/program report in PPPG, UiTM Pahang

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of the project is to enhance the existing approach in report preparation. In *Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Gunaan (PPPG)*, reports of activities/programs were prepared using MS Word template. Typically, the reporting in this department consists of compilation and summary of information regarding the activities/programs that were carried out without much detail. The preparer of the report may encounter several issues. This traditional reporting approach normally take a long time to prepare, involving manual data entry and more prone to human errors including forgot to forward submission. Lu et al. (2018) found out in their study that remembering activities was often a hindrance to effectively and efficiently being able to transfer these activities to written record.

Another drawback with this type of reporting system is sometimes the information provided were incomplete, limited and failed to meet the needs of all parties. Problem such as errors in translation, terminology differences, inaccuracy in information's presentation, excessive information disclosure and report that does not meet the interest and needs of the users are among the problem in reporting information (Labyntsev et al., 2018). Johansen et al. (2018) in their research shown that the members of the organization concerned less about the reputational risk of wrongdoing but more concerned on developing annual reports that met user's needs. This situation may invite challenges and risk in the future if the company's staff only preparing report for the sake of completing it. Furthermore, the current reporting system does not facilitate in-depth analysis because there will be occasions where the data is difficult to interpret. Thus, the existing system was unable to generate interesting report. Apart from that, the current reporting system also sometimes led to missing details and data redundancy. Research by Aversano et al. (2023) shows that as there are no specific guidelines of the report, thus it does not have a high level of standardization.

There are always challenges in managing traditional reporting systems. Navajas et al. (2020) in their research stated that a lack of reporting would anticipate future operational problems. Failure in choosing appropriate reporting approach led to interruption of operations and increase cost. A greater connection with other phases of strategic planning is necessary in order to represent a useful tool (Aversano et al, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this project is to develop a platform that able to house all the necessary information in a more organized manner and provide a better and an interactive reporting system that would assist the management in decision making process.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the reporting process and the challenges in preparing this document, the researchers have conducted an online survey. The researchers have distributed a set of questionnaires to 29 staff (lecturers) of *Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Gunaan (PPPG)* from UiTM Jengka Campus, Pahang Branch, who were frequently involved with the preparation of activity/program report. The survey questionnaire was adapted based on Lund (2001). All respondents were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

4. RESULT

Table 1: Survey Results

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of preparing report in a semester		
Never	6	26.1%
1 - 2 times	14	60.9%
3 - 4 times	3	13.0%
More than 4 times	6	26.1%
The type of activity/program reporting that I have prepared using PPPG Activity Report Log Template		
Activity/program for lecturers	6	26.1%
Activity/program for students	12	52.2%
Activity/program for course/subject	7	30.4%
Activity/program for OPKIM/USR	4	17.4%
Not applicable	6	26.1%

Problems I encountered while using the current PPPG Activity Report Log Template		
Late submission	7	30.4%
Forgot to submit	8	34.8%
Inaccurate data entry	0	0%
Overlapping data	1	4.3%
Uncertain which Google Drive link to upload the report	1	4.3%
Unsure of the report format	4	17.4%
Not applicable	11	47.8%
The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template helps me perform tasks more effectively		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	7	30.4 %
Neutral	9	39.1%
Agree	2	8.7%
Strongly Agree	5	21.7%

Table 2: Survey Results

The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template helps me perform tasks more productively		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	9	39.1 %
Neutral	6	26.1%
Agree	7	30.4 %
Strongly Agree	1	4.3%
The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template saves my time producing the report		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	4	17.4%
Neutral	9	39.1%
Agree	9	39.1%
Strongly Agree	4	17.4%
The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template is easy to use		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	4	17.4%
Neutral	9	39.1%
Agree	9	39.1%
Strongly Agree	4	17.4%
The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template is user-friendly		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	4.3%
Neutral	10	43.5 %
Agree	5	21.7%
Strongly Agree	7	30.4%

The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template allows me to automatically generate report		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	8	34.8%
Neutral	6	26.1%
Agree	6	26.1%
Strongly Agree	3	13.0 %
I enjoy using the current PPPG Activity Report Log Template		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	1	4.3%
Neutral	9	39.1 %
Agree	7	30.4%
Strongly Agree	6	26.1%

Table 3: Survey Results

Overall, I am satisfied with the current PPPG Activity Report Log Template		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Neutral	9	39.1%
Agree	8	34.8%
Strongly Agree	6	26..0%
I am interested in using a more systematic activity/program reporting system		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Neutral	2	8.7%
Agree	8	34.8%
Strongly Agree	13	56.5%

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researchers discovered that out of 29 respondents, only 23 (79.3%) staff were found to be active in report preparation. The highest number of report preparation is the report of activity/programs for students (52.2%), followed by activity/programs for course/subject (30.4%) and activity/programs for lecturers (26.1%). Majority of respondents (34.8%) claimed that forgetting to submit the report and late submission (30.4%) are among the problems they encountered while using the current system. Meanwhile, 17.4% respondents also acknowledged that they are unsure of the report format. The findings also discovered that the majority (39.1%) of the respondents were having neutral feelings to the statement “the current PPPG Activity Report Log Template helps them perform tasks more effectively”. Meanwhile, 39.1% of respondents disagreed with the statement “the current PPPG Activity Report Log Template helps them perform tasks more productively”. It is interesting to note that when it came to the statement about time savings and ease of use, some respondents (39.1%)

were neutral, and others (39.1%) agreed. Most respondents (43.5%) were found to have a neutral opinion on the statement that "The current PPPG Activity Report Log Template is user-friendly" in this study. The findings also discovered that majority of the respondents (34.8%) disagreed that the existing PPPG Activity Report Log Template enables them to generate reports automatically. When asked if they enjoyed and were satisfied with the current system, the majority of respondents (39.1%) responded with a neutral response. Most respondents (56.5%) strongly agreed that they would be interested in using a more systematic system. The usability testing offers some crucial information about the level of usefulness of the existing reporting system. As shown by Nurhadryani et al. (2013), the value of usability testing can represent whether the application built can be accepted by users or not. In this study, however, the existing activity reporting system in PPPG was rated at moderate level and therefore, there is a need to develop better system. To address the issues encountered, the researchers proposed Activities Reporting System (AReS).

6. DESIGN OF THE PRODUCT

AReS was build using AppSheet platform, which could be customized to meet the needs of *Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Gunaan (PPPG)*. The data were captured using *AppSheet* forms and images can be uploaded easily. AReS can be accessed from both desktop browsers or mobile device, and this demonstrates its mobility. AReS aids in automating reporting activities by collecting the essential data and producing meaningful reports more quickly. By converting the old method of activities report preparation from *MS Word Template* into *AppSheet* platform which is accessible using mobile device as well enable users to experience a much faster, easier and increase positive users' emotional experience. Mahlke and Thüring (2007) investigated the relationship between emotional experience and user experience in human-machine interaction. As a result, they found that the quality of information systems has a great impact on user experience.

Traditional reporting methods typically require a lot of time and might be difficult for certain people to understand because they require the construction of numerous sentences. There were possibilities of missing details, data redundancy or the preparer forgot to submit the related report after each activity/programs. On the other hand, AReS is much simpler because the preparer only needs to key in important details as required and upload relevant images for visualizations purposes. A study by Vlasenko, K. et al. (2020) argued that poor interface design and weak usability metrics are major challenges hindering the usability of mobile devices. Adding to that, according to Nariman (2021), poor or non-graphical user interfaces in information systems are a significant deterrent to respondents' preferences and perceived satisfaction.

By utilizing AReS, the preparers are able to present data in a clear, concise, and easily accessible format. This will lead to more accurate and detailed reporting. With AReS, users' satisfaction and experience can be enhanced. A study by Ke and Su (2018) found that user experience can be improved in three ways. First, the information provided must contain important information. Comprehensibility is next, and finally the validity, the importance of which can greatly affect users' assessment of the quality of information.

Considering all of the above and Diaz (2022) who mentions that a user interface also depends on what kind of interactive product it is, what functions it provides for manipulating specific objects, and what needs it aims to meet for its users, the following features of AReS was developed:



Figure 1. AReS (Activities Reporting System)

AReS Features Summary:

Landing Page

- **Welcome/Landing Page** – is the first page that user will see once the AReS is successfully installed and welcomes the user and basically explain the purpose of this system.

Main Menu

- **Main Menu** - the contents are sorted in this section and make it easy for the user to find their way to navigate the apps which consists of Report Activity, Check/Retrieve Report, Add Committee Name and Add Report Preparer links.
- **Report Activity** – allow users to key in input/necessary details regarding the activity.
- **Check/Retrieve Activity** – allow the users to proofread the details and edit where necessary.
- **Add Committee** - to add the name of the committee that is in charge with the activities/programs.
- **Add Report Preparer** - to add the name of the person responsible to prepare the report.

Sub-Menu

- **Sub-Menu** - this menu can be accessed via the menu at the top left of the app. Views that are used only occasionally is placed here.
- **Statistics Dashboard** – visual dashboards in that generate real time data represented in form of various chart types which automatically changes whenever new data are keyed in or updated into the system.
- **Committee List** – to display the list of Committee already registered in the system.
- **Report Preparer List** – to display the list of report preparer already registered in the system.
- **Menu Management** – ONLY admin can view, edit and delete for the purpose of managing the main menu. Users can only view.

- **AReS Background (About)** – explains briefly what AReS is and the team members who developed this system.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of reporting is to compile all details into useful information. A good reporting system will help the management in the aspect of planning, managing as well as controlling the information. Rather than depending on traditional approach of data organization, many companies are switching towards automated reporting system. According to Lu et al. (2018), summarizing and tailoring reports could be improved with tools to help provide suggestions about how to re-write and could help people who struggle with deciding how much detail to provide for an audience. Furthermore, a study by Tanner (2008) reveals that, one of the top five writing skills to be included in a business communication/correspondence course was writing effective reports.

Since *Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan Gunaan (PPPG)* frequently need to handle and conduct activities and programs that involve its lecturers and students, an effective management reporting system is necessary. An effective management reporting system increases efficiency and helps improve decision making process. From departmental perspective, PPPG needs an established and secured databases to store all information. Follow up action can also be taken, and the necessary corrective actions can be recommended.

Activity reporting is important activities in any organization. Based on AReS features, we strongly recommended this platform being used to support the report preparer not only in PPPG but other departments that having similar situation. Other areas of industry such as healthcare where Electronic Adolescent Pregnancy Report (ERAP) system was introduced, it was reported that ERAP was more efficient than older approaches and improved quality of patient care (Sheeder, 2010). This has proven that a new system or approaches such as AReS are welcomed to improve activities reporting process in any industries or sectors at all. AReS is the solution to the busy users, since necessary information can flow and send to right party, in the correct format, at a proper time thus it will ease the reporting process. The inventors will add more reporting features in the future to allow users to schedule reports on their own. The inventors' next plan also includes designing dashboards that are more customized and come out with more interactive reporting approach. We are hopeful that our efforts will facilitate the reporting process and helps organizations to get a better understanding of their activity/programs.

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