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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ODL METHOD FOR ENT530 DURING THE PANDEMIC OF COVID-19

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic of Covid-19 and execution of lockdowns like Movement Control Order (MCO) since March 18, 2020 in Malaysia have impacted many people, industries and institutions. There are many things or new norms needs to be adapted by Malaysians such as practising social distancing, wearing face mask, hand sanitizing, cleaning surfaces regularly and avoiding crowded places. Besides, this coronavirus outbreak has also affected the operation of education systems in Malaysia and the government had to take drastic action by closing schools and universities that involved millions of pupils and students. Approximately 1.2 million students in higher education institutions (HEIs) (across public and private universities, polytechnics, and community colleges), including all campuses of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) across Malaysia were affected by this closure (Daniel Rahman, 2020, March 24).

Before the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, teaching and learning in HEIs including UiTM was focused primarily on traditional classroom learning method or face-to-face learning. One of the common subjects that offered to the degree courses in UiTM is Principles of Entrepreneurship (ENT 530). This course is important with the purpose to nurture the basic knowledge of entrepreneurship among degree students. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19 and the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO), the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) had instructed all universities in Malaysia including UiTM to conduct online classes and lectures by using Open and Distance Learning (ODL) method. ENT 530 was also affected and some modifications had to be made by the resource person to make sure that the process of learning among students would still be as effective as traditional method of learning (Norfazlina Ghazali, 2020).

There are approximately 464 students from UiTM Kedah who have registered for ENT 530 course for March – July 2020 semester. Six lecturers have been required to use ODL method when conducting classes and lectures throughout the semester starting from April to June 2020. The lecturers are using different tools of online teaching such as social media (WhatsApp, Telegram, WeChat, Facebook, Instagram and etc), video conferencing (google meet, zoom, webinar, skype, facebook live and etc), google classroom and many more.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the level of effectiveness when adopting ODL method for teaching the ENT 530 course.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the study is to know the effectiveness of ODL method in teaching of Principles of Entrepreneurship (ENT 530).

EFFECTIVENESS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL)

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) can be defined as teaching and learning process delivered through a technology platform and doing communication using the internet (Hoic-Bozic, Mornar, & Boticki, 2009; Jacobson, Chapman & Van, 2017). According to Clark and Mayer (2011), ODL is not focusing solely on learning through the website or using the internet, but it can also be delivered by recording the audio or video, satellite transmission and interactive television. In addition, the term ODL is often used in different terminology and interchangeably such as e-learning, blended learning and distance learning (Zulfikar et al., 2019).

There have been several studies has been conducted regarding the effectiveness of online distance learning especially among higher educators (Dzakiria et al., 2013; Kintu, Zhu & Kagambe, 2017) Based on a study on final semester students of Ugandan University has measured three aspects of online learning effectiveness which is perspective of students characteristics, design features and learning outcome (Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe, 2017). Meanwhile, Selim (2007) has mentioned three main factors that affect ODL effectiveness including instructor characteristics, technology and student characteristics. These studies indicate that there are few important approaches that can influence the effectiveness of ODL namely, student's commitment, teacher's role and teaching method.

The effectiveness of ODL can be influenced by the students' characteristics through their commitment in every session of teaching and learning and supported by computer and internet application. Having necessary technology gadgets (computer, laptop, tab, smartphone, software, apps and hardware) and accessibility of internet could be the main factors that highly influence the effectiveness of ODL. According to Shraim and Khlaif (2010), the success of ODL was dependent upon how students can manage and use their skills in ICT. This is supported by the study of Kintu, Zhu and Kagambe (2017) which indicates that effectiveness of ODL is closely related to ability in their computer competence and the quality of technology during the teaching and learning session. Therefore, students must be well-versed in the usage of technology gadgets and able to operate various types of apps to make sure the process of ODL can be implemented effectively and smoothly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a quantitative research using descriptive research design. A set of questionnaires was developed to measure the level of effectiveness of teaching and learning using ODL method. The questionnaires will be distributed online to 464 students who registered for ENT 530 course for March – July 2020 semester. The data collected will be analyzed by using statistical software known as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26.

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 pandemic has forced higher education institutions (HEIs) to use ODL method in conducting online classes and lectures as to ensure uninterrupted of study plans among university students in Malaysia. However, the availability and accessibility of internet post the challenges to the educators (teachers and lecturers) and universities especially during the movement control order (MCO) period. The findings of this study would provide evidence on the level of effectiveness for ODL method and identify the better ways to improve the process of teaching and learning particularly for the course of Principles of Entrepreneurship in the future.

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