VCDT: A Method to Stimulate Creativity and Wittiness Among Administrative Science Students

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ABSTRACT
Debate is a common learning method used in the classroom at the secondary and tertiary levels. A lot has changed in the last several years, with learning approaches transitioning from traditional face-to-face to virtual methods. Virtual learning can be dull, unexciting, and monotonous if the instructors don't know how. Therefore, the virtual classroom debate tutorial (VCDT) approach is introduced to foster two-way participation during the online sessions. Even during the new norm, the practice of virtual classroom discussion improves self-confidence, critical thinking, communication skills and teamwork. The VCDT approach promotes a brilliant way of online discussion in which students are encouraged to speak spontaneously on the subject matters. The nature of debate activities helps sharpen rhetorical skills in a fast-paced virtual environment and enriching the students ability to solve problems. Therefore via VCDT exercises, students practice generating ideas under pressure within timeframe. This study employed 100 administrative science students as respondents, and the sampling technique used is purposive. The students participated in the VCDT session during a class tutorial, and a set of effectiveness scales was distributed after the session. SPSS was used to code the data collected from the respondents, and the students result reveal a good sign.

INTRODUCTION
The current pandemic situation and movement control orders have forced students and educators to be creative in the learning process. Many online learning methods have emerged, and learners have adapted and responded to the virtual learning environment. Fostering creativity in online learning requires unconventional ideas, systems, patterns, associations, or the like. The new evolving methods have to create meaning and knowledge using users' senses and judgment. Creativity is the art of being extraordinary in terms of intuition and intelligence to produce the best outcome. In the education sector, being creative is a 'must-have' trait for educators. Teaching is now driven by data such as test scores and dictated by the "best practices" that teachers are losing confidence to get creative on their own (Bunting, 2006). The first step is to break the barrier between educators and learners to indulge in creativity in online education. Online teaching at the tertiary level necessitates lecturers to be more creative with the learners rather than just giving a one-way lecture. Educators must be flexible in accepting new ideas and enhancing speaking and conveying their opinions (Collard & Looney, 2014). In the context of online learning, this means the learning sessions have to be engaging and interactive.

Many universities in Malaysia provide flexible learning opportunities for students. However, this flexibility comes with a cost. Some of the students have to do several tasks at one time. They need to juggle research, work, and family life due to the emergence of online communication via electronic devices. Due to the emergence of technology, face-to-face classes

are replaced with online events and discussions. Universities gradually provide more "flexible" learning experiences in response to lifestyle changes and rapidly evolving technology. In response to the opportunities resulting from technology advancement, the provision of e-learning experiences has quickly been expanding in the higher education sector for over a decade. Online learning is now a part of the educational experience for most university students in many countries. Internationally, the rise of e-learning helps students be more accountable in acquiring knowledge (Kemp & Grieve, 2014). Globally, the education system has shifted, and more educational institutions have become more serious about implementing effective online delivery methods in class (Mitchell, 2019). Colleges and universities are now looking at ways to expand or extend their online programs.

Some programs deliver involve online sessions in their entirety, while others take a hybrid approach by integrating online elements into the existing courses. According to literature, online courses can be "as successful as conventional teaching" when the approach and technology are best fitted with instructional tasks, enables student-to-student interaction, and timely teacher-to-student feedback (Mitchell, 2019). Besides that, the fact that online courses had greater dropout rates than identical face-to-face courses supports the idea that motivation is significant. Isolation, irritation with technology, and time limits imposed by other obligations have all been recognized as factors affecting students' decisions to drop out of online courses. On the other hand, poor motivation has been identified as a significant contributor to the high dropout rates. As a result, student motivation is seen as a critical aspect of success in online learning environments. These variables, taken together, suggest that motivation to learn in technologically advanced contexts should be reconsidered (Hartnett, 2011). Therefore two-way communication and fun learning activities should be implemented to boost students' motivation in this online learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The World Health Organization has classified the new coronavirus (COVID-19) as a public health emergency of worldwide concern. Since its onset, the epidemic has dominated the headlines of numerous international media outlets that transmit information to global citizens (Zheng & Goh & Wen, 2020). Most of the countries implemented lockdown for the safety of the countries. But they realized that this endemic would take longer than expected; thus, several universities and educational institutions worldwide have set out to adopt innovative approaches to reach students at all levels through online instruction in those regions and countries where the epidemic is prevalent (Dong, 2020). Classroom debate is a useful tool to promote innovation in learning. Debate has a long tradition that provides an avenue for students to advocate for themselves and express their ideas. It is a type of competition that enables opposing teams to compete – the affirmative team supports the resolutions, and the opposing team serves as the opponent. Also, debate is a structured method of communication (Noonan, 2011). Recently, virtual classroom debate has become more popular due to the use of online learning across countries. The essence of online discussion is similar to that of face-to-face argument. With established organization and processes in place, the only distinctions are in terms of time and location. Although face-to-face debates are frequently performed synchronously, online debates can be done asynchronously, allowing students more time to think and prepare before

responding, encouraging reflexivity (Archer, 2003). The concept is that university students can improve their argumentation skills by participating in online debates. When engaging in academic argument, it is necessary to determine the strengths and limitations of other people's ideas to construct one's positions. (Marttunen & Laurinen, 2001).

Administrative Science is a branch of governance, public administration, and management that focuses on strategic management, human resource management, and technology management, often in the public sector (Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies Official Website, 2014). Administrative science courses include a wide range of topics and are industry-focused. This area frequently demands students to understand national issues through conversations and dialogues. Debate exercises aid in the development and reinforcement of a variety of administrative science abilities. Thus, according to Duncan (2012), debate would foster written and oral communication skills, critical thinking, collaborative working, civic knowledge, and student participation. These capabilities are essential for social interaction and can help students understand their lessons better.

At the university level, debate is one of the teaching methods across disciplines such as marketing, sociology, psychology, biotechnology, dentistry, and nursing (Jugdev, Markowski & Mengel, 2004). Many deem debate exercises to promote critical thinking and serve as an effective educational tool with many benefits (Akerman & Neale, 2011). The literature shows that classroom debates at the tertiary level provide a lot of advantages. According to Bellon (2000), debate promotes the culture of analyzing, clarifying, and presenting arguments. Moreover, it stimulates understanding of content and knowledge (Vo & Morris, 2006). Another benefit is debate improves personal skills, critical understanding and bolsters teamwork (Keenedy, 2007; Gervey, Drout & Wang, 2009). Omelicheva and Avdeye (2008) research examined the relationship between academic debate and critical thinking among undergraduates. The evidence portrayed that debate keeps students engaged with intellectual practice, thus polish their critical thinking. Furthermore, students are exposed to knowledge from their specialty via debate, contributing to their maturity and critical thinking (Greenstreet, 1993.)

According to Williams and Rhodes (2005), debate experiences offer the students the opportunity to seek insights from the book and critical observation during argumentation. Besides learning to collect and interpret the data, students get involved in research to dig the information in supporting their claims and respond to the contradictory views. Students can participate in online debates asynchronously, giving them time to think and prepare before responding, thus triggers reflexivity (Archer, 2003). Reflexivity is described as the process of "questioning ourselves, clarifying our values and inclinations, diagnosing our circumstances, deliberating about our problems, and defining our own projects" via internal dialogues. Thus, reflexivity helps students in critical and analytical learning.

METHODOLOGY

This section explains the procedures involved in gathering the necessary data to analyze the research objectives further. This quantitative study relies on the descriptive research design where the unit of analysis is the students. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, and 100 administrative science students were employed as respondents. They come from three classes, namely KAM1101A (33 students), KAM1101B (33 students), and KAM1101C (34 students). The students participated in the VCDT session during the online class tutorial. The data gauged from the respondents were coded using SPSS Version 24.

The Virtual Classroom Debate Tutorial (VCDT) Approach is a structured online debate exercise that inculcates creativity in online learning. Students are given at least 15 minutes to prepare their points and articulate them during the debate. Topics are provided during the preparation phase, where students are provided with guidelines for the debate. Then, each debater has five minutes to speak and voice out their opinion. During the debate, speakers from the opposing team may intervene by issuing 'points of information' interventions to voice their disagreement. Each debater takes a turn during the presentation phase until they finish presenting their facts, and all rebuttals are addressed and replied to. Students can give individual ideas, or they can be grouped to present two opposing views. After the points have reached a full circle, a facilitator will conclude the debate by evaluating the facts given by students (strength of fact and substance during the reflection phase before closing. A lecturer or tutor will facilitate the debate session. The ideal duration to have a complete presentation and rebuttal shall be 60 minutes (minimum). The ideal group size to carry out the VCDT exercise is 20.

VDCT implementation through Google Meet during requires thorough preparation to ensure its success. The debate session was conducted according to the three phases of the VCDT approach. Sixty minutes were allocated to ensure students had ample time to prepare and enjoy the activity. Each class was assigned different topics. KAM1101A students were given the topic *"School should block sites like Youtube, Facebook, and Instagram on their computers*."

On the other hand, KAM1101B students were assigned "*Abortion should be banned*." Lastly, KAM1101C students were given the topic "*Government should invest in alternative energy resources.*" There were 60 females and 40 males who took part in the virtual debate tutorial. Towards the end of the session, a set of surveys was distributed to the respondents. The survey intended to measure the effectiveness of the VCDT session.
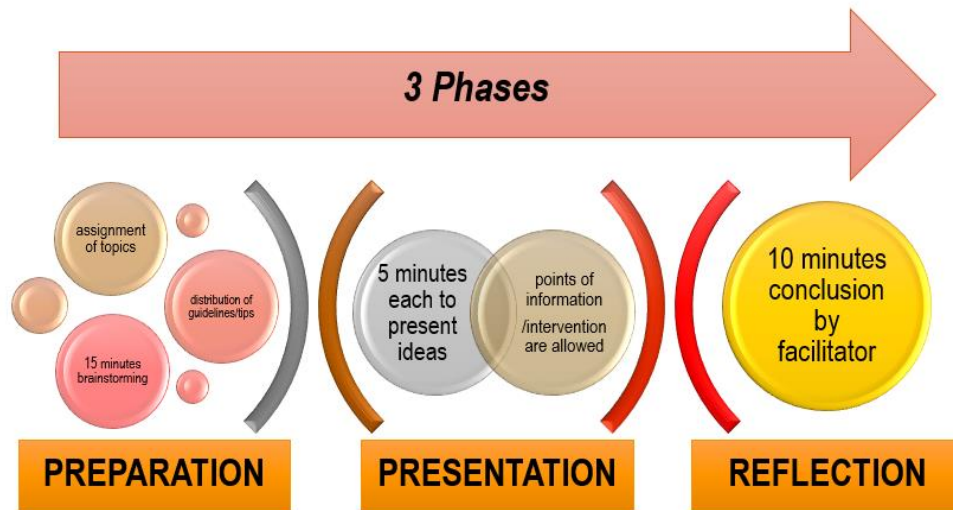
Figure 1. Three phases of the VCDT approach

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results of the debate have been recorded and summarized based on Table 1. The study recorded several responses from the respondents such as "*This debate activity is a good exercise for students to gain more knowledge and to develop our critical thinking, besides, this activity is enjoyable*", "*This debate activity is good as it gives students the urge to think fast*", and "*This exercise is fun. We need to think faster than our opposition. We need to know how to defend our points within a limited time*".

A descriptive analysis was conducted to measure the effectiveness of the debate exercise. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis

Items	Totally agree	Agree	Moderately agree	Disagree	Totally disagree	Total
I am satisfied with the learning experience given by the virtual debate exercise	52	45	3	-	-	**100**
A wide variety of learning experiences were provided	48	49	3	-	-	**100**

to me using virtual classroom debate						
Virtual classroom debate enhances my interaction in class	52	39	8	1	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate is fun	67	30	3	-	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate helps increase my motivation	50	39	11	-	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate helps me understand a topic better	50	37	13	-	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate improves students' speaking skills	64	33	2	1	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate stimulates students' thinking on the subject matter	63	32	5	-	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate promotes group decision making	57	38	5	-	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate helps me understand different perspectives	58	37	3	2	-	**100**
Virtual classroom debate teaches students to use data to support arguments	57	35	6	2	-	**100**
I will choose to participate in debate again if it is available	27	43	26	4	-	**100**
Generally, I am satisfied with the learning environment	47	48	4	1	-	**100**
Generally, I am satisfied with the virtual classroom debate exercises	64	32	4	-	-	**100**

In terms of the effectiveness of the debate exercise, most students agree that they are satisfied with the learning experience that they gain via the virtual debate, and the virtual classroom debate provides them with many learning experiences. Furthermore, ninety-one students agree (totally agree and agree), and eight students moderately agree the virtual classroom debate enhances their interaction in class. The majority of students decided that virtual classroom debate is fun and it helps to boost their motivation. VCDT also allows students to understand a topic better (agreed by all respondents).

Research findings also show that the majority of the students agree VCDT improves their

speaking and thinking skills. Indeed, 95 students believe the virtual classroom debate promotes their decision-making skills and assist them in understanding the topics used in the debate from different perspectives. Moreover, 92 students agree the virtual debate session has trained them to use data to support their arguments. If given the opportunity, 26 students moderately would like to participate in the virtual debate again. The majority of students expressed their satisfaction with the VCDT's learning environment. All students are satisfied with the virtual debate exercise. Overall, most of the students from these three groups are satisfied with the VDCT approach.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, one of the benefits of classroom debate is it stimulates students' thinking on the subject matter. It was observed in this study that the students were iterating the ideas conveyed by the earlier speaker and add their arguments during the debate. This implicitly helps students learn to argue, give reasons, and clarify their points (Othman, Mohamad & Amiri, 2013). This study test students' capability to apply virtual classroom debate during the tutorial exercise. Students were given time to prepare and execute the VCDT approach, and upon completion of the activity, they were given a survey to rate the debate session. Despite the excitement to present their opinions during the debate session, debate promotes interactive learning. This is when students from different backgrounds cooperate to resolve an issue or conflict. They tend to come up with innovative ideas to deal with problems. Today, with the development of the internet and technology, debate provides learners with autonomy to empower themselves from s different perspective (Warschauer, 2000). As a new approach in teaching and learning (T&L), VDCT is deemed significant to enable classes to be conducted in a meaningful way.

Besides, debate activity can be applied in any theory-related courses to encourage a 'fun learning' environment and avoid monotonous discussion in the classroom. The VCDT approach is active, fun, and witty. Therefore, it has the potential to be marketed and applied in courses that entail presentation skills as the medium of assessment. Using the VCDT approach, students will be more excited and eager to think fast and engaged during the activity because they need to comply with the allocated time, thus helping them adapt to the virtual environment. This will make the classroom tutorial to be more entertaining and fun.

Furthermore, the VCDT approach helps students in terms of critical thinking and presentation skills. This exercise will improve their argumentation techniques, thus increasing their confidence level and contributing to a creative online learning environment. This approach is helpful to cultivate creativity in learning, particularly during the tutorial. It increases competence and confidence when they get to polish the way they interpret the data, analytical skills, and inferential skills. These skills are beneficial once they get into the working environment after finishing their studies.

In conclusion, the VCDT approach is a novel method to cultivate a fun, creative, and entertaining online class. It is simple to set up and well worth the effort with minimal preparation. Moreover, the debate exercise is scalable. It is feasible to be carried out regardless of the mode of delivery (face-to-face, online, or hybrid), either paced or unpaced. Hence, debate exercises are impactful for undergraduate students and can be extended to the postgraduate level (Mitchell, 2019). Based on the result of the study, future research may dive into the instructors and course designers and develop the debate assessment for the student. Therefore, we can create good online debate techniques for promoting student interaction in class.

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