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Foreword

The new issue the National Journal Education Development is another platform for national scholars and researchers to share their ideas and findings in the broad aspect of education. Guided strongly by liberalism in education philosophy, we have covered a wide range of topics or areas and research reports in this first issue. Ranging from distance learners to program planning, and from learning strategies to students behavior. We welcome scholars from all kinds of organization to share their views and work with the journal as well as with a wider community of critical readers, educators, program planners and practitioners in these areas.

In line with the new concepts, developments and challenges in education, an educator is no longer relevant with obsolete ideas but they are required to update their ideas, methods and technologies to warrant meaningful learning outcome. This journal published latest ideas and findings in helping the educators to update their knowledge and skill in this area.

Besides discussing purely about education, we have also included two articles on methods of effective interviews and online shopping behaviors among adult learners. These topics made this journal a unique issue that is believed to attract more scholars and readers to access this journal.

Institute of Education Development (InED)

Universiti Teknologi

MARA (UiTM) takes pride in its academic centres and numerous branch campuses in the various states in the country. The Institute of Education Development (InED) is one of the academic centres in UiTM that provides opportunities for those who wish to pursue their academic objectives.

The Institute of Education Development (InED) was formed in September 2001. InED now manages three types of programmes concurrently: the Distance Education Programmes, Collaborative Education Programmes and Continuing Education Programmes.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The objective of these programmes is to offer continuing education to upgrade the knowledge and career of Bumiputras. They also help to increase productivity and contribute to national development.

COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The main aim of these programmes is to provide opportunities for qualified Bumiputera students who do not have the opportunity to enter public universities to further their education in private colleges.

CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The Centre for continuing Education (CCE), established in 2002, emphasizes the utilization of Universiti Teknologi MARA's (UiTM's) human and structural capital for enhancement of knowledge. These programmes are offered to the public.

Lecturers' Perception Towards The Implementation Of Student-Centered Learning Approach In Accounting Courses

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Abstract

This is an exploratory study to identify lecturers' perception towards the implementation of student centered learning, the implementation strategies and any possible problems that might occur during the implementation. It was found that the lecturers are rather divided on whether 'student-centered teaching approach' is suitable for all accounting courses. The majority of the lecturers believed that this approach expose students to understand real world scenario. However, they are not quite sure whether the assessment method is enough to measure students' skills, as well as students' performance. Further, they agree that it enhances students' confidence, communication skills, independent thinking ability, self-directed learning skills and long term retention of knowledge. Lecturers think physical facilities and resources are important elements for the success of implementation. They perceived that updated knowledge is one of the possible problems that might occur.

Introduction

Most of the accounting graduates aim to work immediately after graduation to gain experience for their future career. Employers are quite fussy in terms of accounting graduates selection, and commented that graduates are unable to work satisfactorily even though they graduated with good results. Among the comments were lack of communication skills, interpersonal skills and unable to adapt with the working environment. Therefore, UiTM need to do a post mortem in terms of their syllabus in accounting courses, teaching techniques and students' practical training.

The integrity of the accounting profession has been called into question due to some ethical problems that aroused. Hence, for the purpose of professional development of accounting employees in future, the accounting education should be revised (Russell, 2003). A traditional teaching technique requires lecturers giving lectures, and students silently listen and take notes of the lecture. This teaching style does not seemed to be successful in inculcating certain values, such as critical thinking, work independently and communication skills to the students. They are just too dependent, very receptive, and not proactive in the class room.

Students' centered learning is a new teaching style which can promote the communication skills, interpersonal skills and encourage students to practice in the real world's scenario. Student centered learning are sometimes referred to as problem based learning, case based learning, teaching using case study, discussion class and active learning. Student centered learning encourage students to be active in class. This is due to the nature of the teaching style which needs the students to discuss among the colleagues in their accounting class. The have to work in-groups, try to solve case studies or problems or scenario created by the lecturer. The have to find out all the relevant information related to the accounting courses by using all the available sources that they have such as search for the information through internet, books, and journals and so on. In other words they are free to search information without depending on the lecturer's notes and a textbook.

Therefore this study focuses on the student centered learning style based on the perception of UiTM accounting lecturers in Shah Alam. Their perception based on students learning process include assessment in class, learning outcome gained from the student centered learning and also the lecturer's role on the approach. The main objective of the study is to examine lecturers' perception towards the implementation of student centered learning approach in accounting courses, UiTM Shah Alam. Therefore, the specific objectives can be divided into three objectives. The first objective is to gauge lecturer's perception towards student centered learning style. The second objective is to identify any possible problems in implementing student centered learning and the last objective is to identify suitable implementation strategies for student centered learning.

Literature Review

A lot of literature have discussed on the subject of students' outcomes. Students were seen to be foster a deep understanding of the course content, because they are motivated. MacKinnon (1999), observed that students in PBL courses were motivated because PBL created a sense of classroom community throughout the learning process and allowed students to take control of the problems that they were attempting to solve. Lieux (1996) suggested PBL class attendance is higher as compared to a lecture class because they are motivated to come.

High order thinking is also another issue in PBL. It is always a concern that students do not get sufficient knowledge on the course content. According to Gallagher and Stepien (1996), there was no significant difference in content acquisition between students in PBL class and non-PBL classroom. A similar result was also found by Schlundt et. al. (1999). It is the main aim to prepare students to be self-directed, lifelong learners and practical problem solvers. According to Gallagher, Stepien and Rosenthal (1992) students PBL can be shaped into problem solving skills. In the test, they found that students in PBL groups showed significant increase including steps in problem-finding in their problem-solving process.

In students centered teaching approach, roles of a lecturer is changed to a facilitator. Whereas in traditional ways, the professor gives lectures, provide notes and solution to students. Hung, Bailey and Davidson (2003) suggested three components of effective PBL tutoring such as cognitive congruence, metacognitive and self-directed-learning model, and group processing skills. Schmidt and Moust (1999) stated that cognitive congruence is the ability of oneself in the language of the students. PBL lecturers must understand students' learning styles in order to deliver effective teaching style.

Effective communication is also important to improve good relation with the student, so that students are able to feel guided and will not suffer in the learning experience (Martin, Chrispeels, and D'eidio-Caston, 1998). Outstanding tutors possess a distinct and subtle group of skills, thus Mayo, Donnelly, Nash and Schwartzl (1993) suggested a study to identify the skills. The results suggested four tutor skills which are; promoting group awareness of its own process, encouraging feedback within groups, assisting groups with setting appropriate learning issues, and guiding groups towards integrating learning issues. PBL lecturers must acquire the skills in order to create encouraging teaching and learning environment.

Research Methodology

This study collects primary data through questionnaires survey. It was conducted in the Faculty of Accountancy. 112 questionnaires were distributed to accounting lecturers in the Faculty of Accountancy, UiTM, Shah Alam, Selangor. Out of 112 questionnaires distributed, 54 questionnaires managed to be collected. This will give a response rate of 48.2%. The questions were structured into 59 questions and divided into four sections. Part A concentrates on demographics profiles of the respondents. Part B focused on lecturer's perception on student centered learning. Part C contained questions in relation to possible implementation strategies, and finally part D deals with questions on problems that might occur. Five likert scale was used for part B to D, to assess lecturers perception on the questions. The data collected were analysed using the SPSS package.

The variables tested in this study are demographic information, lecturers' perceptions on student centered learning approach, lecturers' perceptions on implementation strategies and lecturers' perceptions on possible problems faced in implementing the learning approach. In analyzing lecturers' perceptions, the analytical approach has been adopted. First, the mean score for each statement is computed, presented and discussed. Second, statistical tests are carried out to determine whether there are differences between respondents' categories. Third, statistical tests are carried out to determine whether there are any differences in perceptions between those who have implemented the learning approach and those who have not. The same analytical process is adopted for all the four areas of perceptions, i.e. learning process, student learning outcome, role of lecturers, and general perceptions.

Data Analysis And Discussion

The sample is made up of 90.0 per cent female lecturers and 10.0 per cent male lecturers; this is due the higher female than male population in the faculty. It can be seen that respondents in the 10-20 years of teaching group account for 37.2% of the sample. This is followed by the 6-9 years group (29.4%), those with more than 20 years teaching (15.7%), those with three years or less teaching experience (11.8%), and those in the 4-5 years group (5.9%). In this study, the lecturers' perceptions on the proposed student-centered learning approach are described into four areas: student learning process, student learning outcome, lecturers' perceptions on their role, and general perceptions. In each of the areas, the perceptions of the respondents on the statements are measured using a scale of 1 to 5: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) agree; and, (5) strongly agree. There are fourteen (14) statements on student learning process, eight (8) statements on student learning outcome, six (6) statements on perceptions about lecturers' role, and four (4) statements on general perceptions.

Objective One : To gauge lecturers' perceptions towards student-centered learning style

i. Lecturers perception on student learning process

Average scores for all 14 statements under lecturers perception on student centered learning style was 4.10. Thus, it indicates that most lecturers agree with the student centered learning style. Out of the 14 statements, lecturers feel fairly “strongly agree” (mean score = 4.70) that students need to be trained in real world scenarios. The next seven statements have mean scores which are more than 4.0 each, implying that the respondents also agree with them. These, listed in descending order of importance (i.e. decreasing mean score), are: cooperation among group members is necessary to work on assignment effectively; students assessment should incorporate presentations and reports; students are encouraged to meet their group to share information, search for and evaluate resources to solve assignments; presentation is good for students to deliver their ideas on the assignment; students are encouraged to meet their group to evaluate resources to solve assignments; students are encouraged to search for resources to solve assignments; and, students need to be assessed in real world scenarios.

Table 1: Means Scores of Statements of Lecturers' Perceptions on Student Learning Process

No	Statements	Mean	SD	CV
1	Student need to be trained in real world	4.7	0.461	9.8
2	Cooperation among group members is necessary	4.65	0.588	12.6
3	Student assessment should incorporate Presentation	4.54	0.576	12.68
4	Student are encourage to meet their group to share information, search and evaluate resources to solve assignments	4.43	0.838	18.9
5	Presentation is good for students to Deliver their ideas	4.39	0.627	14.3
6	Student need to be assessed in real world Scenario	4.25	0.83	19.5

An independent sample t-test was carried out, and the result shows that the difference is not statistically significant ($p=0.255>0.05$). It is concluded, therefore, that there is no difference in perceptions on student learning process between lecturers who have attended related course and those who have not attended. Both groups equally agree on the statements pertaining to students' learning process. The result of the independent sample t- test does not indicate that two groups of respondents differ in their perceptions ($p=0.597>0.05$), although those who have implemented the new teaching approach appear to have a higher mean score (4.12) than those who have not implemented it (4.02).

ii. Lecturers perception on Student Learning Outcome

The mean score for each of the eight (8) statements reflecting perceptions of lecturers on student learning outcome are presented in Table 2, listed in descending order of size. On average, the respondents agree with the students' learning outcome as reflected by the overall mean score of 4.26. By individual statements, all of the mean scores are in the "agree" range between 3.78 and 4.41. However, the "agreement" is strongest in the case of presentation will help students to increase their confidence level (mean score 4.41). This is followed by student-centered learning develops communication skill in students (mean score 4.38); student-centered learning provides students with more opportunities for independent thinking (mean score 4.30); this approach helps students develop self-directed learning skills effectively (mean score 4.30); Student-centered learning approach improves students' long term retention of knowledge (mean score 4.26); and, students have learned to be more resourceful (mean score 4.06). Two statements have mean scores of less than 4, and under the 5-point scaling system, the respondents may be considered to have agreed to the statements, but with some reservation. These students are able to go beyond the information given by lecturers and students will acquire sufficient knowledge on the learning content through assignments. Thus, it shows most lecturers agree that presentation helps students to increase their confidence.

Lecturers also believe that student-centered learning develops communication skill in student, provides students with more opportunities for independent thinking, helps students develop self-directed learning skills effectively, improves students' long term retention of knowledge, and, helps students to learn to be more resourceful. However, the lecturers only somewhat agree that, with the student-centered learning approach, students are able to go beyond the information given by lecturers and students will acquire sufficient knowledge on the learning content through assignments.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Statements on Lecturers' Perceptions of Student Learning Outcome

No	Statements	Mean	SD	CV
1	Presentation will help students to increase their confident level	4.41	0.669	15.2
2	Student centered learning develop communication skills	4.38	0.599	13.7
3	Student centered learning provides students with independent thinking	4.30	0.662	15.4
4	This approach help student with self directed learning	4.30	0.692	16.1

The result of the statistical test of significance indicates that perceptions do not differ between the two groups of respondents (those who have attended and have not attended); both groups with mean scores of 4.20 and 4.18 ($p=0.877>0.05$), respectively, equally agree that the elements contained in eight statements contribute to students' learning outcome. The mean score for those who have implemented is 4.30 and that for those who have not implemented is 3.90. The mean scores are different and is statistically significant at the 5% level ($p=0.026<0.05$). Therefore, it is concluded that the perceptions of respondents on student learning outcome differ between those who have attended related courses and those who have not attended, with the former being more likely to agree on the statements than the latter.

iii. Lecturers perception on their Role

Lecturers fairly “strongly agree” on the statement the lecturer is needed to give feedback on students' assignments. The mean score of 4.66 approaches the level denoted as “strongly agree”. The next two statements have mean scores of 4.48 and 4.33, respectively, implying that respondents perceive them as “agree”. These are; the lecturer is not the provider of solutions, but more to give guidance and support to students. The rest of the statements (3) have mean scores indicating that respondents somewhat agree on their role as described in the statements. These are: Lecturer should provide assistance and guidance in preparing for their study materials (mean score 3.98); Lecturer's role is crucial for the successful implementation of student-centered learning method (mean score 3.93); and, I will have to spend more time preparing teaching materials before class with the student centered teaching approach (mean score 3.75). Therefore, it shows that lecturers agree with the concept of lecturer acting as a facilitator rather than the providers. It might indicate that, they are more or less ready with the new teaching methodology.

Table 3: Mean Scores of Lecturers' Perception on Their Role

No	Statements	Mean	SD	CV
1	Lecturer is needed to give feedback on student assignments	4.66	0.478	10.2
2	Lecturer is not a provider of solution, but more to give guidance to students	4.48	0.720	16.1
3	Lecturer's role is crucial for the successful implementation of student centered learning	3.93	1.179	30.1
4	I will have to spend more time preparing teaching material for this approach	3.75	1.054	28.1

The independent sample t-test shows that the difference between their mean scores is not statistically significant ($p=0.495>0.05$). It is concluded that although those who have attended courses appear to have a higher mean score (4.24) compared with those who have not attended (4.15), statistically, both equally agree on the six statements taken together. There is also no difference in perceptions between those who have implemented the new teaching approach and those who have not implemented it, with a $p=0.495, >0.05$.

iv. General Perceptions

There are four statements that were designed to capture the lecturers' general perceptions on the student-centered teaching approach. Top of the list is; If I were chosen to teach using student-centered learning approach, I need training before hand, with mean score 4.26. The other three statements shows mean scores between 3.94 and 3.9. Thus, it shows that respondents quite agree to it. These, in descending order of the size of mean scores are; I will consider teaching accounting courses using student-centered learning approach; I prefer teaching using student-centered learning approach to traditional approach; and, Student-centered learning approach should be encouraged in all accounting courses.

The result of the statistical test shows the mean scores of the two groups of respondents are not significantly different ($p=0.841>0.05$). Therefore it is concluded that the general perceptions of lecturers about student-centered teaching approach are the same whether they have attended related courses or not. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups of respondents ($p=0.175>0.05$). It is concluded, therefore, that the general perceptions of lecturers about the student-centered teaching approach are the same whether they implemented the teaching approach or not.

Objective Two: To identify suitable strategy for implementing the proposed learning style

Table 4 below shows the mean scores of the eleven statements used to determine respondents' perceptions on the implementation strategies in descending order of size (important). It can be seen that, most lecturers quite "strongly agree" that access to online journals is the most important element in any implementation strategy with the mean score of 4.75. Classrooms provided with facilities like computers, LCD projector for presentation purposes also seemed to be an important element of the implementation strategy (similar mean score of 4.75).

The next two important elements of implementation strategy are; Discussion room with internet access and Increase materials in the library. Their equal mean scores at 4.65 imply that the respondents fairly "strongly agree". Besides that lecturers also perceived that comments on presentation and reports also considered as important elements with a score ranging from 4.5 and 4.4 respectively. Impliedly it shows that, lecturers perceived

resources (such as journals, internet, books), and facilities (in terms of discussion room, presentation equipment, resource center) provide, and lecturers comments on report and presentation are the most suitable implementation strategies. Hence, student centered learning style can be successfully implemented. An additional question was included under this section on implementation strategy to find out whether all accounting courses are suitable to be taught using the proposed student-centered learning approach. The answer is in the form of 'yes' or 'no'. Result shows that 54.9 per cent of the respondents said 'yes' and 45.1 per cent said 'no'.

Table 4: Mean Scores of Perception on Implementation Strategies

No	Statements	Mean	SD	CV
1	Increase access to online journal	4.75	0.560	11.79
2	Classroom facilities, computers, LCD	4.75	0.590	12.42
3	Discussion room	4.65	0.653	14.04
4	Increase materials in library	4.65	0.688	14.80

Objective Three: To identify possible problems in implementing the proposed learning style

Table 5 presents the mean scores of respondents' perceptions on related possible problems for student-centered learning approach implementation. It can be seen that the agreement on the lecturers should keep their knowledge updated in line with the students, give the highest mean score of 4.54 (approaching 'strongly agree'). This is followed by some students in a group can be 'sleeping partners', with a mean score of 4.23 ('agree'). However, respondents are unsure whether course content knowledge should give problem to the implementation strategies. The related statements scores are; Students might go beyond the scope of syllabus (mean score 3.47), Students might spend most of their time discussing irrelevant topics beyond the syllabus, hence the possible non-achievement of course objectives (mean score 3.27), Students might not have ample time to complete the syllabus content as they have to refer to too many sources (mean score 3.20), and Students might concentrate more on thinking than on factual knowledge (mean score 3.18). This indicates that, their role as a facilitator should provide proper assistance towards the students' coverage on the syllabus content accordingly.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Perception on Possible Problems

No	Statements	Mean	SD	CV
1	Lecturers knowledge must be updated	4.54	0.727	16.01
2	Students can be 'sleeping partner'	4.23	0.942	22.27
3	Different attitudes, leads to disagreement	3.60	1.071	29.75
4	Student might go beyond the scope of syllabus	3.47	1.213	34.95

The result of independent sample t-test shows that there is no difference between both groups of respondents (those who have attended and have not) as the difference between the mean scores is not statistically significant ($p=0.371>0.05$). A similar statistical test was also carried out to determine whether perceptions on possible problems in implementation differ between those who have implemented the approach and those who have not. Results show that there is no difference in perceptions between the two groups of respondents ($P=0.059>0.05$).

Conclusion

Lecturers in the Faculty of Accountancy, UiTM, are rather divided on whether the so called 'student-centered teaching approach' is suitable for all accounting courses. However, 75.0 per cent have implemented the teaching approach in their classes. This reflects the extent of willingness on the part of lecturers to adapt to changes. The majority of the lecturers are strongly of the opinion that the new teaching approach should be capable of making students understand real world scenarios and exposing them to the reality of accounting outside their classroom. For this, they believe that student assessment should incorporate presentations and reports, and that students need to be assessed in real world scenarios. However, they are not quite sure whether this assessment method is enough to measure students' skills, as well as students' performance.

On their part, students should be willing to work effectively in groups when doing their assignments and evaluating their resources to solve assignments. Lecturers subscribe to the notion that the new teaching approach enhances students' confidence, communication skills, independent thinking ability, self-directed learning skills and long term retention of knowledge, and it helps students to learn to be more resourceful.

Lecturers are of the opinion that they need to give feedback on students' assignments and give guidance as well as support to the students, but at the same time they are not too sure whether their roles are crucial for the successful implementation of the learning method. Although they believe that in order to teach using the new approach, they need to go for training, they do not subscribe that much to teach accounting courses using the teaching approach over the traditional style.

Lecturers tend to think that the success of implementation depend overwhelmingly on physical facilities available in the faculty/university. On the other hand, they also fairly strongly believe that it would be problematic to the implementation of the new teaching approach if they do not up-date their knowledge, and if this happens, this could be the most crucial problem in the implementation. The lecturers are also of the opinion that they must possess a high level of expertise under the new teaching approach.

It may be concluded that the perceptions of lecturers on all the issues relating to student-centered teaching approach are the same regardless of whether they have attended related courses or not, and whether they have implemented the teaching approach or not. However, there is a small exception, where lecturers who have implemented the teaching approach are more likely than those who have not implemented it to agree on aspects of student learning outcome. For example, the former are more likely to agree that class presentation helps students to increase their confidence, develops communication skill in student, provide students with the opportunities for independent thinking, helps students develop self-directed learning skills effectively, improves students' long term retention of knowledge, and, helps students to learn to be more resourceful.

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