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GROUP COACHING INTERVENTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

Moniza Abdullah[1]
Siew Foen Ng[2]
Gary J. Confessore[3]

moniza@kelantan.uitm.edu.my
angie_sfng@hotmail.com
gjcon@gwu.edu

Abstract:

In the Malaysian context, after 11 years of formal education, many students still find themselves trapped in situations in which they are unable to exercise autonomous learning skills such as taking initiative in projects, being resourceful in difficult situations, persistent in pursuing goals and flexible in selecting appropriate learning approaches. This phenomenon occurs because of the fact that Malaysian learners have been exposed ingrained with rote learning processes through the primary and secondary school systems. This study assessed the effect on Learner Autonomy Profile V3.0 (LAP) scores of a five-week coaching intervention for pre-diploma students at one university in Malaysia. Seven faculty members of University Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Kelantan were trained to serve as Certified Learner Autonomy Coaches (CLACs) and held coaching intervention sessions weekly for seven to nine students assigned to each of them for five weeks. Coaching in this higher education environment utilized scores from an instrument that was designed to elicit the extent to which respondents claim to possess behavioral intentions associated with learning. Coaches used these responses to guide the individual students through a series of steps to recognize those behavioral intentions that are most likely to undermine and those that enhance their learning efforts. The findings indicate that the student group that had undergone the coaching sessions benefited academically and the coaching interventions had a positive impact on students' behavioral intentions to learn.

Keywords: learner autonomy, coaching, group coaching, behavioral intentions

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper has three central purposes. The first is to describe the Learner Autonomy Profile-V3.0 (LAP) and the Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF), and the processes by which coaches interpret the results of the surveys. The second is to describe the recommended attitude that guides the relationship of the coach and client(s) in one-on-one relationships and in group-coaching settings. Finally, the third is to describe the self-reported experiences coaches and clients have during and after engaging in a period of coaching. An individual's behavioral intentions to learn are dependent upon a wide variety of characteristics that include learning styles, prior experience, perceptions of the learning environment, and other factors (Ng, 2009). According to Confessore (1992), autonomous learning manifests in individuals who feel the need to learn and who then utilize internal and external resources, both human and material, to enhance their efforts. According to Bereiter & Scardamalia (1993), suc-

cessful learning is not simply a matter of attending classes but rather the act of intentionally making learning itself a goal instead of an incidental means to an end. Over the last two decades, ideas of learner autonomy and learner empowerment have taken center stage as the responsibility for learning has shifted from the teacher to the learner. Helping individuals become successful learners requires supporting and nurturing the intentions necessary for lifelong learning. To this end, education processes in formal and non-formal learning environments must seek to develop attitudes that foster the development of autonomous lifelong learners

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy is defined as the characteristic of the individual who exhibits agency (i.e. acts done intentionally) (Bandura, 2001) or intentional behavior with respect to learning activities (Carr, 1999; Confessore, 1992; Derrick, 2001; Meyer, 2001; Ponton, 1999). Further, learner autonomy can be perceived as the personal or individual characteristics leading to the behaviors or processes of autonomous learning. Ponton (1999) and Carr (1999) differentiate between learner autonomy and self-directedness as personal psychosocial dispositions, and on the other hand, autonomous learning and self-directed learning as observable behaviors. According to Confessore and Park (2002), learner autonomy focuses on understanding the capacity to productively participate in learning experiences. This capacity consists of a range of functional learner autonomy that is bounded by two relatively dysfunctional learner states, which are dysfunctional learner dependence and dysfunctional learner independence. Confessore & Park (2002), postulate that functional learner autonomy is a range of ability and willingness to participate in selecting and shaping learning experiences in which the learner may function independently or in concert with others. Finally, the degree to which an individual is engaged in functional learner autonomy is expressed in the extent that the learner optimizes the learning process by making efficient and appropriate use of their personal resources and the resources of others.

According to Ahmad, (1998), after eleven years of formal education in Malaysia, many students have been found to be teacher dependent and lacking in personal autonomy He reports that many Malaysian students find themselves trapped in situations in which they are unable to exercise autonomous learning skills such as taking initiative in projects, being resourceful in difficult situations, persistent in pursuing goals and flexible in learning approaches. Finally, he concludes that one of the reasons for this phenomenon is the fact that Malaysian learners have been exposed almost exclusively to rote learning processes, which he asserts have been ingrained into the primary and secondary school systems. To date, there is a lack of research done in the local context to address the issue of learner autonomy among Malaysian learners. There is a vital need to understand the current state of the capacity of Malaysians to function as autonomous life-long learners. As that effort begins, it is essential to assess the effect existing assessment and development models will have if applied to university students.

This study addresses questions related to the potential effects of five weeks of additional learning support services, in the form of group coaching interventions, for students identified as having relatively low learner autonomy profiles. In order to provide this support service, a number of faculty members at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) were trained during a sixteen-hour workshop by a Master Learner Autonomy Coach to serve as Certified Learner Autonomy Coaches (CLACs). The CLACs were given simulation exercises during the training sessions to guide them in holding their own coaching sessions later on. The trained coaches then held coaching intervention sessions weekly for seven to nine students assigned to each of them for five weeks. Coaching in this higher education environment utilized scores from an instrument that was designed to elicit the extent to which respondents claim to possess behavioral intentions associated with learning. Coaches used these responses to guide the individual students through a series of steps to recognize those behavioral intentions that are most likely to enhance or undermine their learning efforts.

METHODOLOGY

Instrumentation

The Learner Autonomy Profile-Version 3.0 (LAP) and Learner Autonomy Profile-Short Form (LAP-SF) were utilized during the course of this research. Both instruments assess constructs of Desire, Resourcefulness, Initiative, and Persistence, (Park & Confessore, 2002). The LAP report provides sufficient details to be used by CLACs to support coaching and reflection efforts to guide and enhance the respondent's behavioral intentions to learn. The LAP, which comprises of 164 items, was found to have Cron-bach's Standardized Alphas ranging from .9397 to .9711 for the four constructs and from .6878 to .9304 for the twenty- two components of the instrument (Confessore & Park, 2002,). The 66-item LAP-SF was extracted from the 164-item LAP by using stepwise regression to identify the three items from each of the 22 components that are the best predictors of the component score respondents would have gotten if they had completed the longer form. The same Likert-type scale as is used with Version 3.0 is utilized with the Short Form. Park and Confessore (2002) report the correlations of LAP to LAP-SF component and construct scores range from .881 and .988 (p.55). The data acquired using the LAP-SF does not provide sufficient detail about the precursors to the development of intentionality or behavioral intentions contextualized to learning to support the development of intervention activities designed to enhance levels of learner autonomy. However, because of its high degree of correlation with scores that would be expected on the LAP, it can be used for further study using the LAP to support studies that do not anticipate interventions or to screen large groups with a minimum time commitment by initial respondents.

The Desire construct was operationally defined by Meyer (2001) as constituting a syndrome of precursors to the development of beliefs and attitudes that are necessary, but not sufficient, for the formation of behavioral intentions in general which will influence the individual's readiness to learn. She developed and validated the Inventory of Learner Desire (ILD), which comprises of 33 items designed to assess Circumstance, Expression, Group Identity, Growth and Balance, Love Issues, Communication Skills, and Change Skills. Carr (1999) produced the Inventory of Learn-er Resourcefulness (ILR), which comprises 53 items designed to assess Learning Priority, Deferring Gratification, Resolving Conflict, Future Orientation, Planning, Evaluating Alternatives, and Anticipating Consequences. Ponton (1999) produced the Inventory of Learner Initiative (ILI), which is comprised of 44 items designed to assess Goal-Directedness, Action Orientation, Overcoming Obstacles, Active Approach, and Self-Starting. Derrick (2001) produced the Inventory of Learner Persistence (ILP), which is comprised of 34 items designed to assess Volition, Self-Regulation, and Goal-Maintenance.

In the case of the latter three constructs, respondents are asked about what they intend to do when confronted with selected life conditions in the context of learning. As such, they assess behavioral intentions to learn (Park & Confessore, 2002). All four instruments treat learner autonomy as a psychological construct and no attempt is made to assess observable behaviors. Taken together, these surveys produce a profile of the respondent's relative level of learner autonomy (Confessore & Park, 2002). The LAP Version 3.0 requires respondents to use a Likert-type scale (rang-ing from 0 = never to 10 = always with internal decimals of .25, .50, and .75) to indicate the extent to which each of the 164 items represents their intentions to behave in the circumstances described. The resultant data provide sufficient detail about the precursors to the development of intentionality and behavioral intentions, contextualized to learning, to support the development of intervention activities intended to enhance levels of learner autonomy.

The CLACs encouraged the students assigned to them to explain what they intended to achieve when they responded to items that are recorded as lowest and highest, relative to the average score of all respondents. The coaching relationship emphasizes that it is this story, rather than the score itself, that must guide the respondents and the coaches stressed on the importance of discussing both strengths and opportunities as indicated in the survey results. The coaches allowed the respondents to select one to three components that they will focus on through

use of the computer managed reflection log. It was also explained to the respondents the value of the reflection process combined with coaching sessions as the source of potential gains in learner autonomy.

Subjects

All 242 pre-commerce students admitted to the UiTM, Kelantan campus were the subjects of the study. These students were weak either in English or Mathematics or both as they have a Pass in the subjects concerned. Some have credits in either Eng-lish or Mathematics. To limit the time needed for each participant to complete the initial screening phase of the project, the LAP-SF was used to obtain scores for these students. The scores were then compared to all 2,133 cases in the current LAP-SF database to place them in three groups representing respondents with low, moderate, and high scores.

Next, 50 UiTM participants who had been placed in the LAP-SF total score low range were assigned to an experimental group to be invited to complete the LAP and to participate in a five-week course of group coaching. The decision to include only respondents from the LAP-SF total score low range, rather than a stratified random sample of all 242 respondents was based on the intention to provide additional learning support services in the form of coaching intervention sessions to the group of students who appeared to be most in need of such additional support as it was felt that the additional academic support services represented by the coaching process should be expanded for the benefit of those who were most at risk of poor academic performance. This was a particularly important concern because pre-diploma students who do not perform well are not subsequently admitted to university level studies.

Of the 50 respondents selected, 45 completed the LAP pre-intervention. Of these, 35 participated fully in the group coaching sessions and completed LAP post-intervention. Ten agreed to complete LAP pre- and post-intervention but exercised the option, provided under the conditions of the approved informed consent statement, to not participate in the group coaching sessions. This latter group of ten was then included in the "not coached" group for analyses associated with the testing of the research hypotheses as cited in Ng, Confessore and Moniza Abdullah (2012).

Using the random selection capacity of SPSS 16.0, fifty of the remaining initial respondents were assigned to a control group. Of this group, 42 completed the LAP at the beginning and end of the study period. It is assumed that members of this group may have learned about some activities in which the coached group engaged. However, none was given an opportunity to participate in coaching sessions of any sort. Table 1 provides a graphic display of the steps by which the population of 242 pre-diploma students were divided into the coached and not coached subject samples.

Table 1. Progression from Population to Coached and Not Coached Samples

*Based upon their LAP-SF scores, these respondents were invited to participate in group- coaching sessions. They declined, as provided for in the informed consent statement. However, they agreed to complete the point 1 and 2 LAP V3.0 assessments. As such, they were included in the "Not Coached" sample.

	Completed LAP-SF	Invited	Completed LAP-V3.0 Point 1	Coached	Not Coached	Completed LAP-V3.0 Point 2	Complete Cases
Pre-Diploma Students	242						
Control Group		50	42	0	42	42	
Experimental Group		50	45	35	10*	45	
Complete Cases Not Coached							52
Complete Cases Coached							35

Coaching Intervention Research Design

The 35 member experimental group received intervention in the form of group learner autonomy coaching for a period of five weeks. During the treatment period, these students attended CLAC guided weekly group-coaching sessions that varied in length from 90 to 120 minutes and wrote in computer managed reflection logs between meetings. Aside from completing the LAP at the beginning and end of the study period, the 42 members of the control group and the 10 members who had declined to participate in the coaching sessions were given no other information about concepts of learner autonomy.

Although no hypotheses have been articulated regarding the specific nature of the coaching interventions utilized in this study, it is important to note that the model used differed from previous CLAC interventions in two ways. First, CLAC intervention programs have historically been one-on-one relationships designed to encourage clients to be completely open in discussing issues that may have contributed to either high or low LAP component scores. Given the expense of providing one-on-one coaching for large numbers of clients, several organizations have asked whether group coaching might be as successful as group counseling sessions are for other forms of behavior modification. The present study ventured into uncharted territory in that it involved firstly, the use of group rather than individual coaching sessions. Secondly, all previous LAP intervention programs conducted in university environments have been designed to take full advantage of the fifteen-week semester format frequently used in American universities. However, the nature of the pre-diploma program at UiTM allowed for an intervention period of no more than five weeks. Therefore, the present study ventured into uncharted territory along a second dimension when it was decided to limit the intervention period to only one-third the length of previous programs. Given these new conditions, it was clear to the researchers that the present study must be considered exploratory in nature. Using SPSS 16.0, 2-tailed paired samples t-tests comparisons of beginning and ending LAP scores for all 22 components, 4 constructs, and the total score were conducted separately for the Low LAP Coached and Random LAP Not Coached groups. (Ng et al., 2012).

FINDINGS

A positive and significant difference (p = .024; d = .40) was found in the post-test over pre-test scores of the Low LAP Coached group while no significant difference was found in the scores of the Random LAP Not Coached group as cited by Ng et al.(2012).

The findings indicate that the group of students who had undergone the coaching sessions benefited academically and the coaching interventions had a positive impact on students' behavioral intentions to learn.

The Desire construct scores for the two groups in the study by Ng et al. (2012) shows that among the Low LAP Coached group, significant increases were found in Growth & Balance (p = .046; d = .35) and the overall Desire construct (p = .050; d = .34). No significant differences were found among the scores of members of the Random LAP Not Coached group. Similarly, significant increases were found among the scores of the Low LAP Coached group in the Deferring Gratification (p = .049; d = .34) and Evaluating Alternatives (p = .034; d = .37) components of the Resourcefulness construct. Similar to the Desire construct, no significant differences were found in any of the components among members of the Random LAP Not Coached group.

It was also found that among the Low LAP coached group, there were significant increases in Goal-Directness (p = .018; d = .42), Overcoming Obstacles (p = .008; d = .47), Active Approach (p = .011; d = .46), Self-Starting (p = .047; d = .35) and the overall Initiative

construct (p = .015; d = .43). Again, no differences were found in the scores of the Random LAP Not Coached group.

Along the same vein, the results for the Persistence construct denotes a significant difference in the Goal Maintenance (p = .013; d = .44) component among the members of the

Low LAP Coached group. No significant differences were found in the scores of the Random LAP Not Coached group.

A positive and significant difference was found in the post-test over pre-test scores of both the Low LAP Coached group and the Random LAP Not Coached group. However, the Low LAP coached group achieved a greater difference in raw scores.

Based on the research by Ng et al. (2012), it can be summed up that positive and statistically significant differences in mean pre-test and post-test LAP scores of the Low LAP Coached, experimental group of students were found in 8 of 22 components, 2 of 4 constructs and in the total scores of the LAP. No significant differences in the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the Random LAP and Not Coached groups were found. Positive and statistically significant differences were found in pre-test and post-test of the Academic Performance scores of both the Low LAP Coached groups and the Random LAP Not Coached groups. However, the Low LAP coached groups achieved a greater positive difference in raw scores.

Coaching intervention sessions and reflections of CLACs

The Learner Autonomy Profile-Version 3.0 (LAP) was utilized during the course of this group intervention and coaching sessions. This instrument assesses constructs of Desire, (D) Resourcefulness, (R) Initiative, (I) and Persistence (P) as explained earlier. CLACs have been trained to begin the coaching by guiding respondents through

consideration of the extent to which their perceptions of self in relation to others and the family are used to assess the respondents' behavioral intentions to learn. Circumstance, Expression, Group Identity, Growth and Balance, Love Issues, Communication Skills, and Change Skills were some of the issues that the respondents chose to touch on under the Desire profile. The Learner Resourcefulness profile assessed the respondents' Learning Priority, Deferring Gratification, Resolving Conflict, Future Orientation, Planning, Evaluating Alternatives, and Anticipating Consequences. The Learner Initiative profile took into account the respondents' ability to assess Goal-Directed-ness, Action Orientation, Overcoming Obstacles, Active Approach, and Self-Starting. Finally the Learner Persistence profile was designed to assess respondents' Volition (that is the act of using one's will in choosing a course of action or making a decision), Self-Regulation, and Goal-Maintenance.

In the earlier stage of autonomous learning the respondents needed greater amounts of structure and experiential learning as they move into the uncertainty of knowledge and learning. Initially the coaches found them less resourceful than autonomous learners and that they were often easily distracted by other less important things. They were unable to exercise autonomous skills such as taking initiative in projects, being resourceful in difficult situations, persistent in pursuing goals and flexible in learning approaches. They would wait for structure from their class lecturers and wait to be told what to do. However at the later stage, these respondents after five weeks of coaching by the CLACs often valued experiential learning and did not need as much instructional guided structures in order to work within the concepts of the classroom learning model.

The coaching intervention sessions began with a "getting to know you" session whereby each respondent introduced him/herself and gave some background information of themselves. This breaking of the ice session is important as respondents should not feel threatened or forced to say something. They volunteered information about themselves and told the CLACs about their performance in their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination and their worries about certain subjects in which they were weak. Respondents were not asked if they had problems. They merely shared their experiences. The LAP scores were used as a conversation starter. While a respondent is speaking, the others were invited and encouraged to participate in that particular respondent's views.

Desire

The findings of the research done by Ng et al. (2012) reveal a change in the Growth and Balance component of the Desire construct that is both positive and significant ($p = .046$). This component assesses the respondents' ability to bring order to their lives, to have strength of character through adversity and to exercise good judgment to consciously choose the direction of their lives.

Through the discussions with the respondents during the coaching intervention sessions, some of the issues identified by the respondents themselves pertaining to Growth and Balance included issues like the following.

1. Unsure and cannot make decisions on their own.

2. Dependence on others

3. Uncertain if they have made the right choice of taking the current programme.

4. Unable to travel alone, prefer to follow friends and go to cybercafé instead of class.

5. Several of the respondents admitted their main problem was laziness to study. In fact, they admitted that they were lazy to do just about anything, and preferred a carefree life. One respondent even confessed that her enrolment into the university was simply because her parents wanted her to further her studies and not because she wanted to study.

Resourcefulness

The item of the Deferring Gratification component to assess the extent to which one defers undertaking a comparatively more pleasant non-learning activity in favor of a learning alternative showed that in making such choices, the learner places priority on learning now and delaying the possible immediate gratification of doing something other than participating in a learning activity. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .049$) as cited by Ng et al (2012) in their research.

The Evaluating Alternatives component was designed to assess the respondent's practice of weighing the advantages of alternative plans of action regarding the learning endeavor. This may be done prior to engaging in the learning activity, during the activity, or as a retrospective assessment that may modify future learning activity choices. The results of the present study by Ng et al (2012) reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .034$).

During the coaching session, the students identified the following issues pertaining to these components.

1. Have problems following their own timetable they made for studying

2. Wrong priorities. Prefer to enjoy first, study later.

3. Don't plan their learning time and have no fixed timetable for learning.

4. Prefer spending time on Facebook, electronic games and Korean dramas than working on the subjects they are weak in.

Initiative

The Goal-Directedness component assesses the behavior of a learner in establishing a learning goal that will lead to a valued level of learning and subsequently working to accomplish this goal. To provide maximum motivation, the goal should be specific and challenging, and the learner should compare current levels of achievement to desired levels. In addition, the activities created to accomplish learning goals should be interesting, enjoyable, and/or exciting to the individual. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .018$).

The items of the Overcoming Obstacles component were designed to assess the behavior of a learner's continual engagement in a learning activity despite the presence of impediments. Such impediments may be a lack of confidence in learning ability, a lack of learning resources, time constraints, non-learning commitments, monetary restraints, and/or personal issues related to health or family. In addition, friends or family may serve as social obstacles by outwardly opposing a learner's participation in desired learning activities. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .008$).

The items of the Active-Approach component were designed to assess the behavior of a learner taking the responsibility to develop solutions that overcome the aforementioned learning obstacles. A learner that exhibits an active-approach does not wait on someone else to solve his or her problems thereby avoiding a delay in achieving desired levels of learning. An active-approach to problem solving characterizes the learner who is able to allocate time, money, and resources to learning activities by prioritizing such activities over non-learning ones. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .011$).

The items of the Self-Starting component were designed to assess the behavior of a learner motivating him/herself to begin, either initially or after a period of inactivity, a learning activity. A self-starting learner will not wait for others to create learning goals or plans that lead to personally valued levels of achievement but rather will create goals and plans and self-start participation in personally defined learning activities. When participating in learning activities that transpire over long periods with multiple opportunities for inactivity, a self-starting learner will minimize periods of inactivity by re-initiating participation. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant ($p = .047$).

The following issues were identified by the students during the coaching as they pertain to the components under the construct of Initiative.

1. Have problems with Mathematics lecturer who speaks too fast and loses her temper with the students (the Malay term used is "naik angin"). The lecturer also focuses on three particular students only who sit in front and therefore they feel the lecturer does not care whether they understand or not. Some do not like the Mathematics lecturer at all. The majority of them have problems with Mathematics. They have problems remembering for-mulae used in Mathematics.

2. One respondent was unable to face the fact that her parents had divorced, brother had dropped out of school, father had remarried, mother had financial worries, etc.

3. Some respondents felt very nervous when English lecturers questioned them or asked them to read aloud. They had problems with English grammar especially the tenses and spelling of words, problems with vocabulary and did not like to read and they tended to follow their mood of when to read or study.

4. Scared to approach the Mathematics lecturer, they preferred to ask friends for help if they do not understand the subject.

5. One of the respondents did not even know who her father was because her parents had divorced, and she lived with her grandmother. She admitted that to a certain extent this personal issue did affect her studies.

6. A few of the respondents reported dissatisfaction over family relationships, particularly relationships with either mother or father, or both, as a de-motivating factor towards becoming good students or autonomous learners

7. Parents having high hopes and expectations for their children's future success and happiness, thus creating a chasm in the issue of respondents' dissatisfaction over their relationship with their parents.

The combined differences in the post-test over pre-test scores in the five components of this construct were sufficient to yield a positive and significant change in the total Initiative score at $p = .015$. Interviews conducted with the coaches at the end of the intervention period indicated that when compared to the potential gains that could be made by pre-diploma students in the Malaysian context, facilitating understanding of the behavioral intentions associated with Initiative was most likely to yield practical gains for the students they coached. Subsequent interviews with a cross-section of the students who participated in the coaching process indicated that addressing the behavioral intentions associated with Initiative was most productive in enacting behavioral intentions to learn in the pre-diploma courses.

Persistence

The items of the Goal-Maintenance component to assess the behavior of establishing goals that serves as motivators for action. Goal-maintenance maintains the establishment and value of the goal, and provides the energy and direction for action. This behavior involves the strategies for the management of the tasks required for the attainment of the goal, in other words, the self- regulated aspect. The results of the present study reveal a change in this component score that is both positive and significant (p =.013) as cited by Ng et al. (2012).

The students revealed the following issues pertaining to the above components during the coaching.

1. Having low self-esteem and strong feelings of shyness. Both these feelings tended to inhibit them from talking freely about themselves.

2. Having such bad and negative attitudes affected their ability to focus on their studies and they did say that they needed to strive to change their ways to become a better or more autonomous learner.

By the end of the fifth coaching session, the CLACs could observe changes in the respondents' attitude, behavior and confidence level. The subjects of the Low LAP Coached groups found that the coaching sessions had helped them to identify their weaknesses and problems which undermine their capacity to learn. They had taken the initiative to change themselves for the better. This could be seen when discussing the respondents' profile of Learner Persistence which comprised of Volition, that is, the act of using one's will in choosing a course of action or making a decision, Self-Regulation, and Goal-Maintenance. Some of the improvements that they initiated were:

1. Confidence in self.

2. Courage to meet their Mathematics and English lecturers and discuss the areas that they were unclear about.

3. Willingness to ask their subject lecturers questions if they were unsure about the subject matter taught.

4. Able to handle family problems with some maturity in thought.

5. Those who were uninterested in the current course applied to alternative institutions such as polytechnics and nursing schools to cater to their interest.

6. More independent in decisions, able to discard friends who led them astray for new friends.

7. More secure in feelings when going out on their own.

8. Able to attend interviews and speak up in English when called on for Diploma courses in various fields like Sports Science, Nursing, etc.

9. Not afraid of being lost when travelling on their own.

10. Used a variety of learning styles compared to before and they were more focused on their goals in life.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this study suggests the LAP may be a useful diagnostic tool for identifying areas for coaching interventions that can positively impact students' behavioral intentions to learn. The coaching intervention sessions brought about a profound change in the respondents' behavior, experiences, desire to achieve their goals and a positive attitude towards autonomous learning and behavior and self- directedness.

The coaching also helped provide a general picture of the respondent's initial lack of autonomous behavior as observed by the CLACs, and by relating the various profile scores to each other, coaches were able to use the information in the respondents' profile as an eye opener for the respondents to actualize their desires, initiative, resourcefulness and persistence to become autonomous learners through developing an action plan that worked to help them achieve their desired goals and outcomes, and change their behavior and attitudes to being more positive and action oriented.

By identifying the High and Low scores in the LAP-SF profiles of the respondents, and using it as a guide to initiate discussions among respondents about their desires, resourcefulness, initiative and persistence (DRIP) in achieving their goals and breaking down inhibiting factors that hinder them from progressing in their autonomous behavior shows that the LAP-SF has the potential to be used for further research in the future. When no intervention is planned, the LAP-SF can be used as a screening device to save time for large groups of respondents who may have problems in becoming autonomous learners, some of whom will be encouraged to complete the LAP in order to participate in a planned intervention coaching relationship.

The use of group versus traditional individual coaching model was articulated for this study. However, it is apparent from the results of this study that the group-coaching model works quite well, at least in the Malaysian context, in that it yielded positive and significant increases in LAP scores and academic success. Frankly, the authors were quite surprised that significant gains were made in so many components and constructs, as well as in the total LAP score and academic success in only five weeks and with relatively inexperienced coaches. It is recommended that further studies be undertaken to coach students with initial LAP scores from across the low, medium, and high continuum. It is also recommended that longitudinal comparisons of LAP scores and academic progress, as measured by cumulative grade point averages, be undertaken over the entire period of un-dergraduate studies.

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