

Students' Learning Approaches to Enhance Teaching Delivery – Bridging The Gaps Between Learning and Teaching in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM): A Case Study of UiTM Sarawak

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Declaration of Original Work

We, Senian Malie, Hajah Oriah Haji Akir and Noraida Omar:

Hereby, declare that,

- This project is the result of our independent work and investigation except otherwise stated.
- All verbatim extracts have been distinguished by quotation marks and sources of information have been specifically acknowledged and recognized.

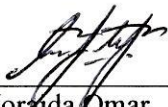
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Date: October 2010

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Abstract

Different learning approaches, learning methods and learning environments are believed to have different effects on students' academic performance (Fuller, 1999; Biggs, Kember and Leung, 2001). Studies have also revealed that students use different learning approaches and strategies and these in turn influence their academic achievement. However, students' learning approaches and strategies are not the sole factors that impact their academic achievement. Other determinants such as learning methods and learning environments may also surface (Jarvis and Woodrow, 2001). The aims of this research are three-folds: to determine the learning approaches most favoured by students and the impact of the learning approaches on their academic performance; to examine the learning methods most preferred by students; and to identify the learning environments most desired by students – in their quest to achieve excellent academic performance. The research uses Biggs, et al (2001) 20-item Revised-Two-Factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F), and adapted Jarvis et al (2001) six constructs to measure students' learning method and five on learning environment as modified by Wishart (2005). The research was conducted on 215 social science degree students consisted of four different programmes. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The finding reveals that students are more inclined to adopt deep learning approach (mean 3.28) compared to those who adopted surface learning approach (mean 2.99). Those who adopted deep learning approach perform better in academic performance (beta value of 0.192) in comparison to those who use surface learning approach (beta value -0.228). The study also indicates that lectures (mean 2.59) is the learning environment most preferred and ranked highly by students, followed by seminar discussions (mean 2.92). The other learning environments such as small group task (mean 3.06), practical workshop (mean 3.20) and individual research (mean 3.28) are less favored by the students. In addition, in terms of learning methods, the majority of the students preferred hearing and explanation (mean 2.44) followed by talking and discussing (mean 2.81). The other learning methods are less preferred by students – reading books (mean 3.60), reading journals (mean 3.86), reading online (mean 4.13), and solving problems (4.02). The findings of this research also seem to reveal that students are dependent on lecturers to help them to understand content knowledge on subjects taught. Essentially, this research provides invaluable information to program management and academicians to tailor their teaching with students' specific needs. Furthermore, it also provides an insight to aid management decision-making to plan intervention programs to encourage students to be more self-dependent and learn in groups and be more resource investigators.

Keywords - Learning approach, learning method, learning environment, deep approach, surface approach.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The Malaysian National Mission to be a developed nation by 2020 essentially requires a strong foundation in higher education. This mission demands Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to play a central role in generating the necessary human capital with first-class mentality to leapfrog the transformation process. Therefore, it is the intention of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia to bring Malaysian Higher Education to the next level by strengthening five key institutional pillars, namely: governance, leadership, academia, teaching and learning, and research and development (message from the former Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Mustapa Mohamed in the NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION PLAN [NHEAP] 2007-2010). The second thrust out of the seven thrusts as envisaged in the NHEAP is to “improve the quality of teaching and learning”. The “critical agenda of student development” is designed to implement the initiatives under the said thrust. The researchers embark on this study with a view to contribute to the ever increasing interests in this field.

It is envisaged that the human capital that is competitive and successful in the challenging local and global market must possess the necessary attribute, quality and qualification. The HEIs – both in the public and private landscape – can churn excellent graduates through molding students' learning experience and better quality teaching faculties coupled with improved curriculum, and the provision of functional as well as adequate infrastructure.