ASSESSING READINESS ON BLENDED LEARNING AMONG LECTURERS IN UiTM MERBOK

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ABSTRACT

Research has found that blended courses have the potential to increase student learning outcomes while lowering attrition rates in comparison with equivalent fully online courses (Dzuiban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004). This study reports the readiness on blended learning among lecturers in MARA University of Technology. Many higher learning institutions in Malaysia have implemented blended learning because of its effectiveness as a learning approach. However, studies have shown that academicians are apprehensive about teaching in blended learning due to several factors. Four factors representing independent variables that contribute to the attitude and readiness with the blended learning. Data are gathered through surveys among lecturers in one of the MARA University Technology branches in Kedah which implemented blended learning. Among the factors which influenced the readiness on blended learning are perceived usefulness of the system, facilities, knowledge and educational technology preference. Findings from this study provided insights on the attitude towards the readiness on blended learning. Its practical contribution includes knowledge which can be incorporated into the blended learning training modules to address the problem of low readiness level on blended learning.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Buzzwords such as learning, blended learning, technology enhanced learning, digital academic and digital literacy have become common place in the educational world. Blended learning means the process of face to face learning and teaching events that are mixed with practical use of technology or online activities. Ward and La Branche (2003) claim that blended learning is often labeled as "the best of both worlds". The definition of blended learning, however, is controversial among researchers and practitioners (Whitelock, 2004; Oliver and Trigwell, 2005). Macdonald (2007) describes blended learning as a "hot topic nowadays but everyone has a different understanding of what it means". Blended learning is a widely used term but some researchers criticized the term's lack of validity which has gained ground with practitioners and not particular, one of the most contested buzzwords is "blended learning" due to its provocative nature of highlighting face-to-face education mediated by technology that fits into the common culture of higher education. "Blended learning was integration of traditional learning and also technology which were online learning that structured", (Sloan, 2000).

"The emerging technologies in higher education have fostered the interest in blended learning" (Chew, 2008). Thorne (2003) also claims that "blended learning could become one of the most significant developments of the 21st century". Recently there has been an increasing number studies on blended learning, dealing with issues such as the effectiveness and innovative impact of the new technologies and readiness of users in higher educational learning environment. This research adds to the growing number of studies by investigating the readiness on blended learning in the context of higher education.

In higher institution such as UiTM, the current scenario adopted blended learning as a further step towards realizing the vision of technology serving lifelong learning and a knowledge based society through enculturation of new and effective pedagogies. By incorporating the online feature to the university's conventional mode, blended learning has created a potentially powerful learning environment that enriches and complements the effectiveness of traditional teaching and learning. Since 2004, faculties in UiTM have begun to offer most of its courses and learning materials using online presentation. Learning activities and resources are no longer limited to resources physically available in libraries, confined to classrooms and lecturers who are physically present on campus. The way it is, blended learning has transformed the university teaching learning approach and thus has increased its capability to offer online and distance education programmed to lecturers and students, not only nationally but also internationally in our new digital world today. This effort has been taken as another internationalization effort of higher education as it is believed that blended learning is the catalyst and mover towards the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the university. Thus, this initiative intends to