

Enhancing Blended Learning as Effective Teaching Methodology for UiTM Accounting Undergraduates

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Abstract

Anuwar (n.d.) in his paper stated that there are many challenges that need to be overcome to enhance the effectiveness of e-learning. One of the challenges is online learning requires a very high degree of self-motivation which is to be found lacking among learners in Malaysia. There should be more studies guiding teachers or administrators on how to create a successful blended learning environment. Moreover, nowadays, the blended learning environment is dominated by tablets, smart phones and touch screen devices that will be some of the interests to be studied in blended learning courses. As technological innovations spread, new types of blended learning will occur and education will be blended with different technologies but the key question to be answered will remain same "How should we organize such learning environments in order to support learning effectively?". The answer is we should study to integrate constructivist and collaborative models into blended learning environments and aim to educate more creative and curious students who read, write and produce for the world. This paper is a concept paper for research that intends to focus on the investigation of the effectiveness of the implementation and usage of blended learning (BL) for UiTM accounting undergraduates. This research will use survey questionnaire and interview as its research methodology. The findings of this research can be used by KPT and UiTM to better understand the effectiveness of BL in teaching and learning activities for UiTM accounting undergraduates. To improve the BL implementation, KPT and UiTM should first understand those problems related to BL that needed to be improved. Therefore, this study hopes to assist University's Society in improving the quality of blended learning implementation and usage for UiTM accounting undergraduates.

Keywords: Blended learning, Online learning, Enhancing, Implementation

Introduction

According to Güzer and Caner (2014), it is observed that “blended learning” is perceived as useful, enjoyable, supportive, flexible and motivator for learners. However, these factors are not sufficient to create an atmosphere for successful learning. In other words, to create a positive learning environment, teachers using blended learning (BL) environments should encourage students for more participation in the environment and should find ways of creating social interaction through more collaboration. Furthermore, blending of face to face and online learning environments should be planned precisely to benefit more from this approach.

Dzakiria et al. (2006) in their research revealed that, lecturers in that study have not adequately provided learning support to facilitate BL and they did not aware of their special role in providing learning support. Lecturers very often become catalysts and this is crucial in enabling learners to liberate their understanding. This finding is in line with research conducted by Fook et al. (2005) in which lecturers often forget or neglect about response requirements and eventually, the late responses from lecturer will reflect negatively on the effectiveness of blended learning.

Mandinach and Miskell (2017) found out that 60% of the respondents believed that students’ inadequate technology skills are an obstacle to their efforts to promote student learning using technology. Ling et al. (2010) shows that even though learners were satisfied with blended learning mode, some of the learners complained that the system is not stable and they frequently could not access the web site and it causes inconvenient to them.

There should be more studies guiding teachers or administrators on how to create a successful blend. Moreover, nowadays, blended learning environment is dominated by tablets, smart phones and touch screen devices that will be some of the interests to be studied in blended learning courses. As technological innovations spread, new types of blends will occur and education will be blended with different technologies but the key question to be answered will remain same “How should we organize such learning environments in order to support learning effectively?”

This paper is a concept paper for research that intents to focus on the investigation of the effectiveness of the implementation and usage of blended learning (BL) for UiTM accounting undergraduates. This research is importance to be studied as it will help Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Malaysia and eventually Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia to better understand the effectiveness of BL in teaching and learning activities for UiTM accounting undergraduates. This research aims to suggest improvements on the implementation of the blended learning in UiTM. This study hopes to assist University's Society in improving the quality of blended learning implementation and usage for UiTM accounting undergraduates.

Literature Review

Anuwar (n.d.) in his paper stated that there are many challenges that need to be overcome to enhance the effectiveness of e-learning. First, generally there is still a lack of awareness amongst the population especially the parents who feel that traditional learning mode is better. Second is the low adoption rate, in which many institutions are keen to embrace e-learning but they still lack of the content, inadequate infrastructure together with the problem of digital divide especially to those who live in rural area. Next, to engage the content, it requires a rich combination of multimedia components. However due to bandwidth and connectivity limitations, downloading of engaging content to the learners will

be slow and it may create frustration and boredom among learners and it affects the ease of learning. Lastly, online learning requires a very high degree of self-motivation which is to be found lacking among learners in Malaysia.

Blended Learning (BL) is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online experiences. However, it is not clear as to how much or how little, online learning is inherent to BL (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

BL offers possibilities to create transformative environments that can effectively facilitate these skills. It also represents a new challenge for higher education instructors to provide the necessary teaching presence in a blended environment (King & Kitchener, 1994).

i-Learn Centre (iLeC), since its inception on 1st December 2005, is entrusted to be the e-learning provider for UiTM academic communities and its students with its very own e-learning platform, the iLearn portal. The centre together with the Academic Affairs Division have come up with a variety of initiatives to better service, support and complement the teaching and learning demands of modern education scenario. One of the programs initiated by the center is BL. BL has been proposed in UiTM in the year 2010 and at the beginning, BL was compulsory for several generic courses. In year 2013, UiTM agreed to use BL mode for all courses as UiTM aims is to become a zero classroom – based tutorial.

In UiTM, the delivery method of BL is a combination of technology-based materials along with face-to-face instructions. As an example, a lecturer can begin a course with a structured lesson in the classroom, and then follow up with an online tutorial. Lecturer and students may discuss more about their course content using forum created and monitored by i-LeC.

iLearn Portal in UiTM has now been rebranded to uFUTURE. uFUTURE is managed and maintained by Institute of Continuing Education & Professional Studies (ICEPS) UiTM. UiTM lecturers can now conducted BL using the uFUTURE. Lecturers need to register the BL through uFUTURE. At the end of the semester, BL reporting is generated based on the data from uFUTURE. However, UiTM lecturers are not being limited to use only uFUTURE to conduct BL, they are allowed to use other platform for their teaching and learning including Google Classrom and Microsoft Teams as long as they enter the details in the BL reporting. (EduTech Series, 2021).

When the pandemic COVID-19 emerged at the beginning of the year 2020, open and distance learning (ODL) is widely used in the teaching and learning activities in UiTM. Surat Pekeliling Timbalan Naib Canselor (Akademik dan Antarabangsa) Bilangan 01 Tahun 2020 encouraged all UiTM lecturers to conduct the lecture and tutorial sessions by using BL instead of direct instruction method.

According to Sonesson et al. (2018), educational strategies and methods, such as blended learning can improve education and training by combining computer-assisted methods and media, with traditional classroom methods. Blended learning can support the learning process with unlimited practice in reasoning and decision making through virtual patients.

Sivapunniam (2009) stated that blended learning offers a welcome break from the monotony of classroom instruction since it allows the learners to make choices about their own learning on where and when they want to learn, what and how they want to learn and their goals in learning. With blended learning, educators can help the learners to realize on their own strengths and weaknesses and help them to carry out their learning process outside the classroom via online learning. Blended learning is not only effective but also enjoyable

and motivating process because it caters to learners' diverse learning that can be achieved from the interactive learning activities offered by online learning.

A study in India found out that blended learning technologies are more successful in facilitating learning than traditional ones. The utilization of blended learning tools increased Gen Z student engagement and they appreciated the process. For instructors looking to make the switch from traditional learning to interactive learning to create immersive classrooms, the report suggests blended learning technologies (Nayar & Koul, 2020).

Dzakiria et al. (2006) in their research revealed that, lecturers in that study have not adequately provided learning support to facilitate BL and they did not aware of their special role in providing learning support. Lecturers very often become catalysts and this is crucial in enabling learners to liberate their understanding. This finding is in line with research conducted by Fook et al. (2005) in which lecturers often forget or neglect about response requirements and eventually, the late responses from lecturer will reflect negatively on the effectiveness of blended learning.

Mandinach and Miskell (2017) found out that 60% of the respondents believed that students' inadequate technology skills are an obstacle to their efforts to promote student learning using technology. Ling et al. (2010) shows that even though learners were satisfied with blended learning mode, some of the learners complained that the system is not stable and they frequently could not access the web site and it causes inconvenient to them.

Shorey et al. (2018) concludes that to enhance the blended learning environment, the technology should be constantly improved by incorporating more interactive functions and should be tested to accommodate the learners' needs.

Müller et al. (2023) suggest that the following educational design principles should be given special consideration when implementing flexible study programmes in a blended learning environment: adequate course structure and guidance for students, activating learning tasks, stimulating interaction and social presence of teachers, and timely feedback on the learning process and outcomes.

Proposed Methodology

This research will use a self-administered questionnaire for data collection which embraces questions relating to resistance and experience of using blended learning in UiTM. This questionnaire will help to provide the answer on the level of effectiveness of BL in UiTM. For each questionnaire item, the respondents will be asked to indicate agreement with the given statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Structured interview will be conducted to identify their actual experience in implementing or conducting BL as one of the teaching methodologies in UiTM. This will be conducted by a series of open-ended questions that will give this proposed research an opportunity to use a combination of descriptive and analytical methods. This method will be used to accompany the information obtained from the questionnaires. All the interviews will be audiotape at the same time note-taking will play a small role during the interview. The confidentiality of the interviewees' comments is given and guaranteed. The interviews will help to provide the answer for the solutions and methods for the BL to be used effectively in the future.

The questionnaires will be distributed to both accounting undergraduates and lecturers in UiTM. The interview will be conducted with selected students and lecturers. Students and lecturers are selected to be the target respondents because they are the primary users of BL.

Conclusion

This study aims to improve the implementation of BL in UiTM. To improve the BL implementation, KPT and UiTM should first understand the experience of the BL users and the problems related to BL that needed to be improved.

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