Student's Cognizance in Deploying Module Information Booklet (MIB)

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ABSTRACT

It is a norm in the learning process for the students to have a different understanding on how the learning outcomes will apply to them upon completion of the module. Therefore, it is crucial for lecturers and students to have a clear direction on the objectives and learning outcomes of a particular module (Norton, 2009). The fiasco to understand the relationship between the knowledge acquired by the students and to emulate with the programme of study may result in failure to inculcate the desired graduate attributes. Angelides (et al, 2005), Campbell & Norton, (2007) and Norton, (2009) have studied to measure the usefulness of MIB. The purpose of this study is to analyse and understand the students' cognizance in deploying the MIB as a learning tool. The study was conducted in Taylor's University whereby the students are required to utilize the MIB to understand their latitude of learning. The study has exhibited positive impact towards the students' learning process and time management. Although the students encountered some challenges in understanding the learning outcomes, however, the MIB, has expedited them in coping with the peregrination to complete the syllabus.

KEYWORDS

Module Information Booklet, Learning outcomes, Efficient and effective teaching methods, Social interaction, Higher education, Campus environment, Teaching and learning assessment.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Module information booklet (***MIB***) is a guideline that defines the structure and content of a course. It helps to map out clearly how resources (e.g. books, equipment, time) and class activities (e.g. teacher-talk, group work, practical, discussions) and assessment strategies (e.g. tests, quizzes, homework) will be used to ensure that the process of learning meet its objectives of the course successfully. The MIB is usually an interpretation of a specification or syllabus and can be used as a guide throughout the course to monitor progress against the original plan. The MIB is the onset for the learning process whereby it is a pinnacle that can bestow an overview of the module that is being taught (Iqbal, 2014).

Traditionally, lecturers in the higher learning institutions may have embraced the teaching methods habituated by them as students. Perhaps, there was no comprehensive explanation of the learning outcomes disseminated to the students. Therefore, the "lecturer" may go through some experimental teaching and learning adventure. Positively, widening of the repertoire of teaching methods among academic staff and utilization of technology in enhancing learning simulation may diminish the severity of the trade-off between teaching effectiveness and efficiency as the unit of teaching resource (Bourner, 1997). Correspondingly, Bourner (et.al.1997) suggests that the benefits of teaching and learning diversification may further be value-added if it is accompanied with clear

identified learning outcomes with proper references. Further, this information may alleviate the students to develop their competence to plan and manage independent learning.

Therefore, preparation of comprehensive MIB is crucial to ensure the rigorous information of the courses disseminated transparently and clearly understood by the students. Hence, indirectly the MIB will be a platform for various references pertaining to a designed "contract"[1] between lecturer and students that they have to fulfill. The nobility aim for MIB may be unachievable if there is lack of evidence of clear understanding and may be partially functioning if the utilization is limited to educators and not absolutely utilized by the students. This can be supported with the study by Parkes and Harris (2002), however, this research applied the term '*the MIB*' instead of syllabus.

This is an intriguing proposition to identify and analyse the students' cognizance in utilizing the MIB as the tool for learning. It is believed that the use of the MIB will also advocate the students to optimize their learning process and time management, eventually accomplishing an actual transformative learning.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

It is cardinal and fundamental that teachers provide a framework for the course they will be teaching. Recurrently, the framework is provided to the students through a course syllabus. For learners, the syllabus provides security in knowing the direction and expectations for a particular module (McKeachie, 1978; 1999). There may be as well additional means by which instructors communicate information and convey expectations to students; however, the syllabus provides a written form of communication that lists responsibilities and sets goals for the course (Eberly, Newton, & Wiggins, 2001). "The syllabus is often the initial communication tool that students receive and is habitually the most formal mechanism for sharing information with students regarding the course" (Eberly, Newton, Wiggins, 2001, p.56).

Bers, et al. (1996), suggest that the integrity of a syllabus is imperative for administrative purposes because (1) syllabi are explicit public descriptions of courses, (2) they can and often are used as evidence in grievance and judicial hearings, and (3) they are used routinely to determine course equivalency in transfer situations. On the grounds that the syllabus serves these functions, they form a contract between the student and the university. According to McKeachie (1999), the syllabus is organizational and centered around a schedule of assignments, tests, and topics. McKeachie also views the syllabus as a contract, therefore, he recommends that professors listen to student input and consider alternative ways in which students can achieve class goals. His assertion is that "students who have options and a sense of personal control are likely to be more highly motivated for learning".

Literature about assessment and good teaching practices suggests that course syllabi are important for a variety of reasons and the syllabi can be used as indicators of student learning outcomes (Matejkab & Kurke, 1994; and Imasuen, 1999). A profound syllabi identify learning objectives or expected learning outcomes, enumerate topics or subjects to be covered, and describe the learning activities in which students will engage. Logical

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[1] The "contract" in this context refers to acknowledgement of an agreement on course information between lecturer and students.

syllabi link these so that they are mutually supportive. For example, the objective "to learn to work in teams" in a course that does not include any group assignments is hardly supportable (Imasue, 1999).

However, omission of information on a syllabus does not mean that students fail to acquire skills and broad knowledge in a course; however, omissions in the syllabi of explicit information pertaining to these areas are flags that prompt further investigation (Bers, Davis and Taylor, 2000).

Ellis (2004) believes that teaching through digital referencing may help the student to enlighten the info seeking, besides, promoting knowledge extraction from multiple resources. Web 2.0 in education is one of the primary catalysts that motivate the seeking engine in teaching and learning process (Hicks and Graber, 2010).

In contrast, Bourner (1997) suggests that the search for better ways of achieving particular learning outcomes is better than widening the repertoire of teaching methods without the references which means to diminishing the effectiveness and teaching efficiency. This would be the lead in this study to deeply engage the students with understanding of the modules taught and the learning outcomes. The quality assurance in course design, delivery, and evaluation begins parallel with instructors' first contact with students Grunert, Millis and Cohen (2008).

In addition, Matejkab and Kurke (1994) suggest four identified major uses of a syllabus: (1) a contract between the instructor and the students, (2) a communication device that would connect the instructor to the students, (3) an instructional plan for the instructor and (4) a cognitive map for the students. Bers, Davis and Taylor (1996) have focused on accountability, emphasizing the use of the syllabus as an administrative tool for the documentation of teaching effectiveness, which could therefore provide evidence for the accreditation of an institution or the performance evaluation of its instructors. Finally, Cullen and Harris (2009) claimed that the syllabus might gauge the mindset of the instructor, assessing whether the instructor was influenced by an instructional or a learner-centered paradigm.

The second set of multiplicities concerned itself with content tightly connected to the purpose of the syllabus. One notable exception to the conventional syllabus design, which included course objectives, calendar, and grading, was the learner-centered model (Grunert, 1997). In the learner-centered model, the content of a conventional syllabus was extended to include learning tools that would help students succeed in the course in addition to a variety of mechanisms that would encourage student engagement in the course and interaction both with the instructor and among themselves (Grunert, Millis, and Cohen, 2008). The similar model has been earlier propounded by Parkes and Harris (2002) whereby, the syllabus was an instructional aide and a motivational tool that would extend learning beyond the physical borders of a classroom and continue after the end of the class.

By the same token, a well-designed syllabus can provide information that yield students to become efficacious learners in areas that outstrip the scope of their courses. Predominantly, a learning-centered syllabus will provide information on how to plan for the tasks and experiences of the semester, how to evaluate and monitor performance, and how to allocate time and resources to areas in which more learning is essential. This information can help students develop self-management skills that are valuable beyond the demands of a particular course.

Self-regulated students can then take the timeline explicated in a contractual syllabus and use it to plan and monitor their learning, comparing their performance to the objectives identified by the instructor (Grunert, Millis, and Cohen, 2008; Parkes and Harris, 2002; and Diamond,1998).

3.0   METHODOLOGY

This research is designed to investigate the students' cognizance in deploying MIB as a tool of learning. The preparation and the designation of MIB and its syllabus contents may be different among other HE institutions. However the main contents such as learning objectives, learning outcomes, subject contents and assessment due dates are crucial information to be interpolated (Parkes and Harris, 2002). In addition, a contract between the lecturer and the students, an instructional plan for the students and a cognitive map for the students are important to ensure the students are fully equipped with a proper academic guide. In tandem with, the university's mission for life-long learning, the academics need to reverberate on the learning preparations and students' understanding of the modules. Therefore, the following model framework was derived based on the research.
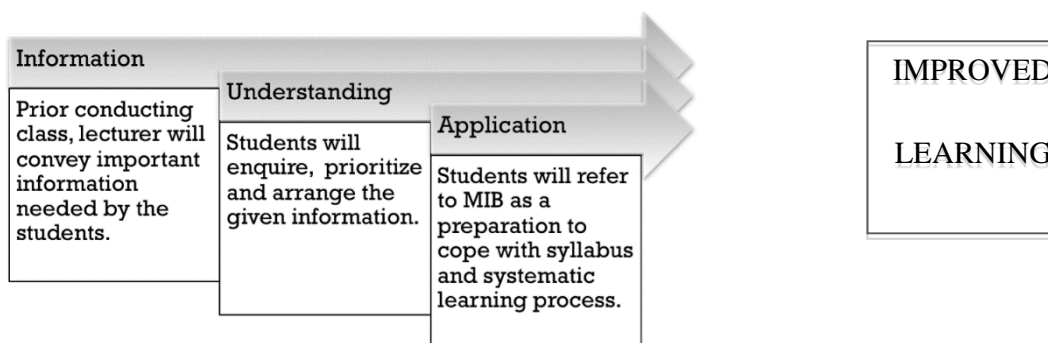
Model framework

Diagram 1.0 *A Model Framework for Improved Learning Process*

The diagram above is constructed based on the three components of the study namely information gathered from the MIB by the learners, the level of understanding of the learning outcome and learning objectives as well as the level of application of the components of the MIB to their course of study. Thence, the component of information conveyed by the lecturers have enabled the students to set a level of preparedness of the module concerned as the students have acquired pertinent insights of the topics, learning outcome, relevant activities, assessments and specific deadlines. Thus, this will conjure the level of understanding of the learning outcome and objectives of the module as the students have prioritised the information acquired to organize and gear up for the module. Hence, the understanding of the learning objectives and outcome has escalated the students' capability in the application of the contents of the MIB to ameliorate a taxonomic learning process. This has been discoursed further in the analysis below.

Data

The research employed the survey strategy whereby questionnaires were distributed to gather quantitative data on the participants' perceptions and other information related to the research objectives. About 150 first year undergraduate students had participated in this survey and the respondents for this study were selected through a convenience sampling. However only 122 respondents have answered the questionnaire deliberately and this sample indicates 30 per cent of the total population.

The questionnaire consists three parts of questions for MIB user, 1) Information of the MIB, 2) Understanding of learning objectives and outcomes and 3) Utilization of MIB in learning process. The respondents were asked to rate the perception on a five-point scale as follows: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat Agree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree. The last two questions were requested the respondent to insert any other important information that should be highlighted.

This study has utilized descriptive analysis to highlight the percentage cognizant in employing the MIB to determine the level of preparedness. To measure the level of improved learning process, correlation matrix and regression analysis is used to indicate the strength of association between two variables and their relationship.

4.0   ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Taylor's University has embarked in deploying MIB for all of its programmes to facilitate students with pertinent and relevant information on its module contents. The comprehensive efforts by lecturers in compiling important information as such MIB to comprehend its benefits to students may not be achieved if students' perception is not in tandem with the understanding and application of this as a tool for learning.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Information:					
Well informed with the LO	0.0	10.7	18.2	46.3	24.8
Well informed with all the topics	0.8	3.3	23.1	42.1	30.6
Well informed with the assessments	0.0	0.0	25.6	37.2	37.2
Well informed with all activities	0.0	0.0	28.1	43.0	28.9
Well informed with all deadlines	0.0	0.8	19.8	43.0	36.4
Understanding:					
Understand the Learning Objectives	0.8	2.5	31.4	47.1	18.2
Understand the Learning Outcomes	0.0	4.1	28.9	49.6	17.4
Application:					
Able to make an early preparation	0.8	2.5	27.3	42.1	27.3
Able to keep track on the topics in syllabus	0.8	3.3	23.1	49.6	23.1
Able to relate the LO	0.8	5.0	27.3	47.9	19.0
Able to identify the weakness/ strength of each topics	0.8	8.3	38.0	33.1	19.8
Improved the learning process	0.8	1.7	35.5	36.4	25.6

Table 1.0 Percentage of students' cognizant in deploying MIB

Although the lecturers are convinced that they have imparted in depth explanation, however the crucial point is the students' level of understanding of the MIB. In *Table 1.0*, although 50 per cent of the students are able to understand both learning objectives and outcomes, there are 30 per cent of the students are indeterminate with the future learning process. Nevertheless, students are enlightened and have perspicuously understood with the list of the topics and are able to conform to available assessments and deadlines. However, the students still did not utilise the MIB to the

optimum, whereby almost 30 per cent or more than 35 per cent of the students are unable to appreciate the benefits in utilising the MIB. This might be due to the result that the students may be indecisive on the activities that going to be conducted, and unable to relate the learning process with learning outcomes and thus unable to track the weak and the strength of each topic. Finally, although the majority of 60 per cent agreed that the MIB helped them in their learning process, but up to 40 per cent of students still being uncertain. This may indicate there may other tools which may help in learning process such as technology, environment, space of the classroom (Ceppi and Zini, 1998: Jamieson, 2003 and Morgan, 2011)

	OUTPUT	INFO	UND	APP
OUTPUT	1.000000			
INFO	0.540114	1.000000		
UND	0.478273	0.659940	1.000000	
APP	0.731759	0.550657	0.547549	1.000000

Table 2.0 Correlation Test

Correlation test in *Table 2.0* indicates strong association between information and application towards the learning improvement. Meanwhile, understanding of learning objectives and outcomes remain moderate. This result may be reflecting the transitional culture in first year university system, whereby, the students are still adapting with the new learning flow and the lecturers tends to simplify the explanation in align with the student's adaptation reason. In addition, there are many challenges in an integration of full understanding measurement of learning outcomes (Moore and Gayle, 2010), although it can be useful litmus test for pedagogical practices (Olson, 2009).

Dependent Variable: OUTPUT
Sample (adjusted): 1 121

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-Statistic	Prob.
INFO	0.265447	0.100941	2.629723	0.0097
UND	0.001014	0.101123	0.010028	0.9920
APP	0.726804	0.087308	8.324600	0.0000

R-squared	0.562474	Mean dependent var	3.842975
Adjusted R-squared	0.555058	S.D. dependent var	0.856429
S.E. of regression	0.571272	Akaike info criterion	1.742580
Sum squared resid	38.50956	Schwarz criterion	1.811897
Log likelihood	-102.4261	Hannan-Quinn criter.	1.770732
Durbin-Watson stat	2.147534		

Table 3.0 Regression Analysis

In Table 3.0, students find that the given information provides comprehensive information for study preparation. The stipulated information enables them to embattle and cope with syllabus. In addition the module information has significant influence on how the students' apply the contents into their preparation of study. Therefore it is quite evident from the analysis that the students focus most attention to the pre-requisite information of the module and how to apply contents of MIB into their study, although the understanding of the learning objectives

and outcomes seem to have been ignored. However, the similar results may not be reflected if the same study is conducted among the Year 2 or 3 of the undergraduate students as they may have reached a high level of understanding of the module objectives and outcome due to their divulgence and experience. The R-squared indicate 50% of the variables facilitate the students' learning process.

The students' response indicates that the MIB is an effective tool to accumulate all pertinent and comprehensive information of the module contents. The detailed and factual information if acceptably and extensively understood enhances rigorous application of the MIB before and during the course of study. Hence, this can be achieved if the "contract" between the lecturer and students is effectuated amicably.

5.0   CONCLUSION

The findings indicate preliminary analysis on students' cognizant in deploying the MIB among undergraduate students in Taylor's University. Students seem to be acclimatized to the hypothesized information and instructional guide. Therefore, they have extracted minimum important information such as topics in syllabus, assignment components and its deadline. Henceforth, the learning outcomes and objectives, the application and other ways to utilise the MIB have been less focused by the students.

The MIB is designed to deliver comprehensive information to students in order to ensure that the preparation can be made prior to the class. It is more sagacious if the lecturers could take extra initiative to teach the students to utilise the MIB. It is presumed that the students are able to distinguish and create a better understanding in every module that they embark upon and the learning outcomes and objectives of every module taught is clearly explained by the lecturer to avoid misconception. According to Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, it is obvious that teaching/learning in a modern educational system needs to be improved, therefore, enhancement of the existing system should cater for the students' direct involvement in their personal development, which means consequently, utilizing the MIB can be a preliminary step to achieve this in the learning environment (Herlo, D. 2012)

By the same token, the lecturer may find it user oriented while imparting the knowledge because the students are familiar with the objectives, learning outcomes and direction of the modules that they teach. This will enable the students to understand the application of each module to their graduate capabilities and job market scope in future. Henceforth, a further research may be conducted in future to analyse the difference in learning process between a MIB user and the non-MIB user among private university in Malaysia.

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