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MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**Effects of Virtual Learning to Learning Process in Private
University College in Malaysia**

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Abstract

Virtual learning has been the new learning process that overcomes the boundaries of geographical barrier in between the lecturer and students. Even though virtual learning breaks the barriers between lecturer and students, however there are still some problems that occur in the process of it. Empirical study shows the limitations of virtual learning, which affects the design of virtual learning.

Therefore, the main goal of this research is to present answers and suggestions to the research questions. This research is a causal research where quantitative research been used. The results of the studies were then analyzed and scrutinized based on the findings. The conclusion of the research entails the answers for the research questions. Education through virtual environment is an enhancement of traditional physical education. Students are encouraged to be participating and independent in learning which could closes the communication gap between lecturers and students.

Keywords: Virtual Learning, learning process, students, distance learning

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Background

In this age today, there exist many new pedagogical in education. In a well known "Knowledge pyramid", it is a basis to describe the learning process hierarchy (Barnett, 1994), in which it is an ascending process from the fundamental understanding to the top of the pyramid to where the knowledge can be. However, this is a traditional learning process in higher education where it starts from the bottom and up slowly to the top of the pyramid, yet, today, the scientists and the instructors are more looking for a more efficient path in the pedagogy, according to Bleimann (2004).

The increases usage of the technologies such as the World Wide Web created a new world for the education where the World Wide Web has created the non-traditional education as well as bringing a new prospect of global education marketplace. Distributed learning enables the learning process to be performed at anywhere, anytime where allows the instructor and students to be located in different, non-centralized location as the learning take place via the World Wide Web as the medium to communicate with each other.

Several different learning methodologies existed and have been commonly used among higher education. First and foremost, face to face learning approach has been the most common and traditional way of learning. It's a straight forward learning process where the instructor and student would be interacting in real time inside a classroom giving lecture and feedback at the same moment.

Another form of learning methodology would be the project based learning where problems are solved in real world with various complex tasks but this methodology is not applicable to every education field as it needs high

involvement on the specific contents thus it's more appropriate for the corporate training where it could train up the skills and teamwork in a particular project (Bleimann, 2004).

Next, the Virtual Learning is a new methodology where it is an implementation of education that can be applied within varying education models for example, face to face or distance education and educational philosophies for example behaviourism and constructivism (Nichols, 2003). Virtual learning uses a number of technological tools which could be applied in various contexts where it isn't a distinctive educational system in itself. Thus, virtual learning is not comparable with the face to face delivery nor the distance education as it could be used in within each of these models. Students are also encouraged in constructing their own knowledge by using the technology tools where at the same time these tools be used to deliver the learning materials which acts as a pilot for the students in a structured manner.

Nonetheless, Virtual Learning enables unique forms of education that fits within the existing paradigms of face to face and distance education (Nichols, 2003). In another aspect, virtual learning enables a new exhibition of education where it has potentially combined the tenacity of face to face with distance forms of education using the technologies such as notice board. In virtual learning, it has directly changed the role of the instructor where this has represented a more developed form of existing instructional methodologies. Other than that, virtual learning could also be used in two different manners; the presentation of education content, and the facilitation of education processes (Nichols, 2003).

The term "virtual learning" has come to represent a wide spectrum of learning scenarios, from courses which are supported in any ways by learning technology to courses delivered entirely online in which there is no face to face interaction between tutor and student, or between individual students (Milligan, 1999).

In an analysis of Mason (1998) studies, he identified that there are three models for virtual learning. Firstly, a "Wrap around" model for virtual learning where the

online interaction is a vital activity for the delivery of one course and the medium for delivery is primarily conducted online but nevertheless it would still need to incorporate with offline elements such as face to face tutorials. The second model would be "Content + Support" where basically the content is presented in the form of booklets or distributed electronically across the Internet whilst there's a need for the support to be delivered online. The last model, "Integrated" virtual learning, a model where different teaching opportunities are exploited where online communication and collaborative working are used to contribute to make a course fundamentally different from the face to face learning. In the integrated virtual learning scenario, it would be essentially less use of static learning material and eventually emphasis on the establishment of a community of learners.

Communications need to be established between the students and instructor among themselves no matter it's within the virtual world or even in the real world. There are 5 types of interaction in virtual learning environment, these interactions are based on the number of contributors and the contributors refer to the users of the virtual learning according to Tebb and Dee (2003).

i. Student and Instructor (One to One)

A one to one communication which it's between the student and instructor, could easily be done by using instant messaging or email.

ii. Student to Student (One to One)

A learning situation that the students form a discussion group between themselves and the virtual learning environment could ease it by creating a bulletin board or even a discussion room.

iii. Instructor to Students (One to many, Published)

This communication mode is rather similar to the traditional method of teaching but it uses the method of publishing notes to the student.

iv. Student to Students (One-to-many, Published)

This would be sharing of knowledge among the students. They would brought up their own experience or knowledge that they have and shared upon other students which eventually could enlighten the other students that having the similar problems.

v. Instructor and students (One-to-many, Discursive)

This communication mode uses the bulletin boards or discussion rooms by the users which are the instructors and students. They could post messages and it will be responded by either any of these users; a fully maximized bulletin board could eventually lead to efficient teaching and learning process.

1.1 Statement of Problems

Virtual learning has been the new learning process that overcomes the boundaries of geographical barrier in between the lecturer and students. Tools such as voice & video conferencing, email and instant messenger has been used as a communication method in virtual learning when a lecturer or the students couldn't meet up with each other. According to Leonard (1996), virtual learning is defined as the delivery of learning through electronic mediation which bridges the gap caused when the instructor and student are separated in either time or place. Even though virtual learning breaks the barriers between lecturer and students, however there are still some problems that occur in the process of it. Virtual learning can be categorised into 2 categories which are the human and the system where complication occurs from both side. The complication that occurred at the human side would be referring to human attitude and behaviour. According to Britain and Liber's (1999) studies, the main players or users of virtual learning are divided into two main classes, which are students and tutors. In a review of study from Gunawardena (1995), virtual learning environment involves with complex interactions and the group activities were observed during a computer conferences, in the observation, the problems caused more by the social interaction between group and the tutor than the

technical problem, and these social dynamics problems would likely decreased the effectiveness of virtual learning. Students' behaviour and attitude is vital in virtual learning as virtual learning is about independent learning therefore student with lack of self discipline most likely would cause problems in the process of virtual learning such as the student didn't participate in online forum, student neglect to check learning material that been provided and so forth. Students would faces delay in email reply whenever they sent it to the lecturer as lecturer would not be in front the computer all the time checking the emails and considering the delay in it. From all these, the problem exist as human's attitude and behaviour is unpredictable.

Other than that, other problems that exist would be the system where it could affect the virtual learning process at such the instability of one network and the server. If the system is instable the lecturer and student would frequently be disrupted as a smooth communication couldn't be established. A lagging network could as much bring headache to the users than pleasure as it plays a great role to the effectiveness and quality for learning process. Hammond (1999) believes there is a significant technical threshold, which might influence the participation rate. As virtual learning has brought numerous advantages to the users however it could not avoid the discontentment in using the virtual learning as well. Problems still exists in between the collaboration of student and lecturer such as problems that occurred during the activities in virtual learning which affects the quality in virtual learning. What would be the methods to overcome the problems and at the same time to improve the quality of it?

1.2 Questions

- i. What are the mindsets of students in admitting to the virtual learning environment?
- ii. How virtual learning be used in higher education to improve the learning process?

1.3 Objectives

- i. To identify the effects of virtual learning environment to learning process.
- ii. To identify the problem that arises within virtual learning to learning process.
- iii. To determine alternative solutions for virtual learning implementation.
- iv. To determine the predictors of students learning performance.

1.4 Scope of Study

The research mainly focused on the effects of virtual learning to learning process in the private university college. The research will be streamlined according to the question arises and objectives of the research. Effects of the virtual learning will be determined moreover identifying the problem that arises within virtual learning. Alternative solutions are proposed to solve the occurred problems in this research so that it could improve the learning process.

1.5 Limitation of Study

The limitation of the study would be the representative of the sampling where it's mainly focused to only one private college where the results would not be representative to other colleges as well as the whole Malaysia. The results can only be representable to the college that participated in this research that is in Kuala Lumpur.

1.6 Significance of Study

- i. This research would be useful in learning the mindset of students in the learning process
- ii. By identifying the problems in the virtual learning environment, it will help the educator to know where the problems arise in the learning process.
- iii. On the other hand, from the problem that arises, the educator can improve the learning process by using the proposed solutions to aid learning in making it a better environment

1.7 Assumptions

- i. The target respondents are at least engaged once in the virtual learning environment before.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The virtual learning environment concept is an efficient yet effective way of learning in educational field. The studies of virtual learning will be disclosed more in depth at the following section as well as the reason of applying the virtual learning in education would also be reviewed. Additionally, the function of the lecturer and the student's attitude is equally important to be understood in virtual learning. Not to mention, the effectiveness and major problems in the virtual learning would also be discussed.

2.1 What is Virtual Learning?

Virtual learning is referred to the way of learning which eliminated the geographically distance between lecturer and students thru the virtual platform by deploying the usage of Internet in the learning interaction. According to Leonard (1996), virtual learning is defined as the delivery of learning through electronic mediation which bridges the gap caused when the instructor and student are separated in either time or place. Virtual learning is an information space that has been designed, which educational interactions occur in the environment, turning spaces into places, and the information or social space is explicitly represented (Dillenbourg, 2000). Virtual learning environments are not restricted to distance education, it also enrich with classroom activities. Virtual learning environments integrate heterogeneous technologies and multiple pedagogical approaches (Dillenbourg, 2000).

Other than that, virtual learning also involves with the use of new multimedia technologies with the internet support to improve the quality of learning by

facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration (Varis, 2003). Thus, students would know how to incorporate the technology such as using the Internet to access and communication information effectively and also understanding at the same time having the ability in interacting across different cultures and education custom. At the same time, virtual learning has also makes the students to learn to be independent whilst having the needed support from advanced technologies. It would be better and easier to communicate with the lecturer at the same time as real time interaction would be achieved.

2.1.1 Functions of Virtual Learning

According to Britain and Liber's (1999) studies, the main players or users of virtual learning are divided into two main classes, which are students and tutors. Inside the virtual learning environment, tutors usually will have additional tools and privileges which allow them to add materials and track student progress compared to the students.

A navigation model acts as an essential part of virtual learning as it is involve with how are all the tools and features linked together to form a system. The navigation tool allows the user to navigate freely around the environment as it also involves with the look, the feel and the easiness of using the system.

Other features such as notice board, reminder and discussion room is where consider to be the announcement area which practically a useful features in keep the students up to date with any announcement. As for the email, conferencing tools and forum is used as the communication tools where it enables the students and lecturer to create communication with each other even with the geographical barrier.

Next, the multimedia resources area which allows students to access for educational video, learning notes and even powerpoint slides. It acts as an