Learning Behavior in Using Portal System for Architecture’s Students in the Research Methodology Course

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Abstract: E-learning is one approached in the learning style of the courses for UKM Bachelor of Architecture program, namely Research Methodology. The e-learning is not a new paradigm in today’s teaching and learning process, thus, using the platform of UKM portal system, SPIN we start to adapt this approach and make it as practical to the students. This study is highlighting 4 learning approaches that might be preferred by the students in encouraging them to use SPIN, namely class contact hours of every 2 weeks time, 1 h lecture, white board style and let the student talk and do. The findings from the study reveals, in principal the students agree to use the SPIN, with the lecturer observing the usage of the system in SPIN via progress monitoring report and correlate the total time, numbers of visit and page hits of the students. High total time does not guarantee the student is an active SPIN user. Nevertheless the study also found that there is a cheater in this system.

Keywords: E-learning, learning behavior, research methodology, spin,

INTRODUCTION

The e-learning is not a new learning platform in Malaysia. Various forms of e-learning portal are available on the internet and almost all Malaysian public universities have its own e-learning platform. Most of them are running on the web-based technology that makes it available from any part of the word at any point of time (Tang and McCalla, 2005). As mentioned by Anuwar (2010), e-learning market had an annual growth rate of 50% up to the year 2004; and the greatest growth rates for e-learning will be in the Asia Pacific region. This shows the e-learning become the most preferred method of learning in the future. Benefits of e-learning include flexibility, accessibility, convenience, cross platform, low delivery costs, ease of update, collaborative learning and scalability (Hansen, 2003; Anuwar, 2010).

There are dramatic impacts in the last few decades that information technology has grown rapidly towards the educational practice (More-Buzetto, 2008; Chou and Tsai, 2002). As the Internet is broadly used for educational purposes, students may have more rich experience of utilizing the Internet. Undoubtedly, appropriate attitude plus basic knowledge towards the Internet is a prerequisite for successful internet based instruction. Tawil et al. (2010, 2011) experimenting e-learning mathematics engineering and found that most students satisfied in using e-learning as their platform of self learning.

However, studies on the fundamental nature of student’s use of Internet have not kept pace with their Internet use (Havick, 2000). According to learning theory, learning process is enhance when students participate in the learning, when assignment given help them to get better understanding and it involves critical thinking by applied and reflective activities (Metzger et al., 2003).

Furthermore, e-learning has the potential to become an efficient education tool with low cost (White, 2003). Lord Dearing of the United Kingdom proposed the use of e-learning to resolve problems arising from growing numbers of students and to decrease universities’ funding. He also agreed that e-learning will ‘accommodate new and innovative learning models and strategies’ (Woodfine et al., 2008). In addition, university graduates these days need to be familiar with and knowledgeable of contemporary issues, including ICT knowledge (Zaharim et al., 2009). E-Learning programmes not only reduce costs but also help students to enhance their ICT skills.

In UKM, the e-learning platform is called SPIN system. It provides the benefits as listed by the scholars above. This study provides discussion about learning experience using the SPIN system. It highlights earning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Time frame from previous class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 Jul 2010</td>
<td>discussion and lecture</td>
<td>not applicable (1st class)</td>
<td>2 weeks time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Aug 2010</td>
<td>discussion and lecture</td>
<td>within 2 weeks time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17 Aug 2010 discussion and lecture within 2 weeks time

![Image of handwritten notes]

- Today: 17/8/10
- Next class: 21/9/10
- Task (in hand):
  1. Develop issue
  2. Diagram

- Next task:
  1. Develop issue
  2. Table
  3. Facts
  4. Figures
  5. Paper

- GPARH:
  - Literature
  - Journal
  - Emerald
  - Some direct

- Classification:
  1e - highest
  1c - lowest
approach in the class, as well as analysis based on the SPIN progress monitoring report.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The course under study in this study is KKSB 5151. This is a research methodology with weightage of 1 credit. It is one of the courses for Year 5 Semester 1 Bachelor of Architecture UKM. For this semester, we have only 5 students for the course. This course is a preparation for the students to undertake Dissertation course when they enter into Year 5 Semester 2.

This section describes about the initial reflection and action plan in adapting SPIN system. Basically when go online method of teaching, it has to be interactive so that it will attract the students to stay in the online platform. Not to forget is the offline system need to be changed as well as to accommodate the online method. Using the similar approach for both situation of online and offline will make no difference and defeat the purpose of online teaching.

**Initial reflection:** In the early semester within the first week, the students are brief about UKM SPIN system and its application for the whole semester. The WIFI connection in the class is stable at most of the time, thus make the SPIN demonstration smoothly running. The students are also told that their SPIN activity can be monitored via SPIN progress monitoring report. This is indirectly to convey the message to the students for them to become active learner of the SPIN. This means that information that we receive is accurate and also will get the most recent addition and/or changes which in turn saves time.

That's what I think at the moment, maybe my classmates would like to add some more...

**Reflection 1:** Salam friends, What I observed in using spin is that not only the class contact hour is less, it also formalizes and eases the dissemination of data and information.

This means that information that we receive is accurate and also will get the most recent addition and/or changes which in turn saves time.

**Reflection 2:** spinnn just okayyy...trying to put images direct on screen so we can have discussion through our sketch/pic...

**Reflection 3:** hahaha,,i just know tat here can post pic = p

**Action plan-learning approach in class:** In providing better learning environment and experiences for the student, the teaching approach must be expanded from its traditional way. Teacher-centered style, class room concentration and normal lecture delivery is no more be attractive to the students. One of the learning space that contributes to better learning environment is by utilizing virtual space (Sharifah Hapsah and Riza Atiq, 2010), that in line with today’s living environment. In using SPIN for this class, we introduced a number of approaches that reflects the offline method of teaching for the class as below.

**Class contact hours of every 2 weeks time:** The class is conducted within 2 weeks time as to update the students about the progress of their learning. This also will ensure both students and lecturer keep updates about the topic of the class. More importantly is for the students to feel that the class is running. The activities during the class are discussion and lecture i.e., 2-way communication. The summary of the class activity is depicted in Table 1. The time frame from the previous class is maintained within 2 weeks time.
One hour lecture: For every class, only 1 h is dedicated for the lecture. The class might run more than 1 h as to include discussion and self-reflection from the students about the topic that have been learned for the particular class. This is to provide the optimum learning time for the students. Giving a lot of input and materials to the students in single class session will make them lost and cannot gain much. One hour time seems to be effective in achieving this goal.

White board style: As by using SPIN, all the notes in the form of Microsoft Office Power Point and Portable Document File (pdf) are pre-uploaded before the class i.e., within first week of the semester. This makes the students got ample time to read the notes and can do forecasting of what is going to be learned throughout the whole semester. During the class, the white board is used for teaching. No power point projection since it is pre-uploaded. With the white board, the students can clearly see the process flow of the subject that is going to be taught, one by one and step by step; whilst this is not easy to be demonstrated with power point. Table 1 shows the example of teaching materials using the white board.

Let the student talk and do: In this approach, the lecturer will just start the argument. The seating arrangement is like a group discussion i.e., roundtable set-up so that it will help the students to talk and discuss. This approach is mentioned by Sharifah Hapsah and Riza Atiq (2010) in creating holistic learning experience i.e., the lecturer do less talking, let the student talk and do their project and the lecturer should concentrate providing effective supervision to the student project. As to stimulate this session, the white board materials will help the students to do so.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The initial reflection suggests that the students get encouraged to use the SPIN for this semester. The SPIN menu i.e., email, discussion board and upload assignment is frequently being used by the students. Table 2 shows the total time of SPIN progress monitoring report as per 22 September 2010.

Based from Table 2, it shows the inconsistency of the usage between the total time and numbers of visit. Obviously, Student 3 (S3) shows the highest total time i.e., around 424 h (about 17 days), but number of visit is 4 times only. Similarly, this also happen for S5, with total time of about 283 h (about 11 days), but number of visit is 7 times only. The total time and numbers of visit for S1, S2 and S4 seems to be realistic as compared to S3 and S5.

This shows possibly there is a student who log in into the SPIN, do nothing and just make the system idle as to record their total time within the SPIN. As students in the know their time and movement in the SPIN is recorded, there is a tendency for this scenario to be happen.

Table 3 shows page per hits and its relation to students as per 22 September 2010. The top 4 pages visited are discussion board, lecture notes, assignments and lecture notes (download). For student name per hits, it is interesting to record that the S1, S2 and S4 record a realistic visit to the page. For S3 and S5, their hits per page are obviously low as compared to the other 3 students.

From these 2 sources of data that simplified from SPIN system, it shows there is inconsistency between total time and numbers of visit, when we compared with the page perhit. The high total time does not necessarily support the theory that the students really use the SPIN effectively. The students might visit to other internet page while concurrently viewing SPIN.
for nothing. As observed occasionally, S3 and S5 are very active in their Facebook page. Even though the who tend ‘to cheat’ the system. Through observation, the lecturer can see this shortfall via the attitude of students i.e., attendance to the class, active Facebook user, late comer, not participate in the class activity (as referred to 4 learning approach above) and missing in action. In short, total time and numbers of visit is not a guarantee that reflects the good learning experience via SPIN system.

**CONCLUSION**

Various teaching methods nowadays give the lecturer to adapt numerous approaches in the e-learning system. The combination of online and offline method has to be integrated in providing better learning experience to the students. SPIN system is good platform for e-learning. Besides online, the 4 approaches of teaching, namely class contact hours of every 2 weeks time, 1 h lecture, white board style and let the student talk and do; are likely to be accepted by students in encouraging them to be active SPIN user. While the students in principal agreed to use the SPIN, their progress monitoring report somehow shown vice versa. The lecturer has to carefully observe this matter as prevent “cheated SPIN user”. However in using this system, the students and the lecturer can interact at anytime and anywhere parallel with nowadays character of the students. Thus the method of teaching and learning need to move towards their preferable way of learning and thinking.

**REFERENCES**