The Compulsory Co-Curricular Activities via Online Learning Amid The Covid-19 Pandemic: Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The global crisis due to the outbreak of COVID-19 was changing the world of education in the virtual world and was done at home. Furthermore, not only causes learning and teaching to be conventionally delayed but also makes teachers' tasks more challenging when they need to adapt to new life norms and habits that require the Teaching and Learning (PdP) process to be implemented online. As well as students who must be prepared for various online learning challenges with the limitations of skills in the use of ICT tools, online learning systems or platforms provided by IPT, mental and physical readiness as well as the learning environment and so on. Therefore, the research wants to explore the student's perception towards readiness of learning via online method, then students online class accessibility and material and assignment delivery for co-curricular activities submission digitally. The findings of the study highlighted that the students are ready and prepared to learn their co-curricular activities online, the internet access is also is at a satisfactory level in which they can access the notes and submit their assignment digitally as a result of effective teaching and learning from their respective lecturers.

Keywords: online learning, online class accessibility, material, and assignment delivery

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian government has taken important necessary action to closely observe the World Health Organization (WHO) situation report on the COVID-19 outbreak around the world since the dangerous virus was firstly identified in Wuhan, South China in November 2019, and the first case in Malaysia is started on the 25th January 2020 which traced back to 3 Chinese nationals that have traveled to Malaysia in which they previously had close contact with an infected person in Singapore. (Elengoe A. (2020). The WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020, and two months later which is on March 11, 2020, the outbreak was declared a global pandemic. (Adil MT, Rahman R, Whitelaw D, et al,2020). Pandemic happens when an infectious disease spreads easily from humans to humans in various places throughout the world (Rusdiana et al., 2020). The epidemic of the Coronavirus Novel 2019 (2019-nCoV), which still expands without any sign for a break is the first global health crisis in the millennium era after the Spanish Flu Pandemic in 1918 (Hasanah et al., 2020).

As of the 4th February 2021, there were 231,483 COVID-19 cases including 826 deaths and 181,886 cases of recovery reported by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Malaysia putting Malaysia in the 50th world rank ahead of Azerbaijan. The total case around the world as of now is 104,984,392 with 2,280,508 deaths and 76,733,407 has recovered as reported by coronavirus world meters. In reaction to the COVID-19, on 18 March 2020, the Malaysian authorities have officially promulgated the movement control order under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967. The order has included the restrictions of the Malaysian citizens and foreigner's movement including the closure of all public and

private higher education institutions (IPTs) and skills training institutes nationwide. The closure of higher education institutions and schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the structure of Learning and Teaching (PdP) from the PdP method directly in the institution to the teaching and learning through the online method completely. The Special Meeting of Ministers on the Implementation of Movement Control Order (PKP) of the National Security Council (MKN) on 16 May 2020 has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) regarding the conduct of academic activities at the campus of Institutions of Higher Learning (IPT) during and after PKP. MOHE through a media statement dated 27 May 2020 informed that all teaching and learning activities must be implemented online until 31 December 2020. However, since the pandemic in Malaysia is getting worse and the Malaysian healthcare system is at a breaking point as stated by Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, the government has declared the extension of the Movement Control Order (MCO) until 18th February 2021 intending to flatten the rising curve. The declaration made has made a tremendous impact in all sectors including education in which not only the curricular classes have to be made online to follow the course syllabus, the co-curricular activities also needed to be changed to comply with the implementation of online learning.

Co-Curricular activities

Co-curriculum is said to complement the curriculum and can help potentially individual self-development as described by Walker (2003). Among the advantages of co-curriculum activities is the development that is emphasized through co-curriculum is skills of leadership as stated by Rohanida Ab. Manaf and Mohd. Sofian Omar Fauzee (2002) stated that co-curricular activities can provide initial training in terms of leadership, personality, and community among students. The activities could also help the student to learn the generic skills to prepare themselves as a worker that can fulfill the industrial needs in future. (Esa, A., Md Yunos, J., Kaprawi, N., & Yasak, Z. (2005).

As in Politeknik METrO Johor Bahru, for semester June 2020, the semester 1 student for Diploma In Islamic Banking is required to enroll in the course of Ping Pong whereas the students for semester 3 of Diploma in Logistics and Supply Chain and Diploma in Islamic Banking are required to take the elective course of Audio Visual, Mesra Alam, English, and Entrepreneurship. As for semester 3 students of Diploma of Entrepreneurship, they are required to enroll in the course of Entrepreneurship. An interesting fact is, all the above co-curriculum courses were taught face to face in the previous years. However, due to the pandemic, the method of teaching and learning has changed into online learning. This requires the full creativity and skills of the lecturers to make sure that not only the materials, notes, methods of teaching are fully compatible with online learning but also the types of assessments and projects that allow the students to complete it online, fulfills the course and program learning outcome (CLO & PLO) and also ensures that it follows the standard operating procedure (SOP) to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Online Learning

The implementation of online learning is not alien to the Polytechnic system since the Malaysian Ministry of education has implemented the National eLearning Policy in 2011 and National eLearning Policy 2.0 in 2017 which combines an e-learning agenda to improve the quality of learning and teaching (PdP), promoting Malaysian educational brands as well as for settling and enhancing the prominence of local HEIs in the landscape global education as outlined in Globalised Online Learning (GOL) in 9th leap of the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2015 - 2025 (Higher Education) which also known as MEB (HE). The aim is to concentrate on access to education, improving the quality of learning and teaching (PdP) in addition to allowing learning to be customized according to the current needs of students.

The above initiative made by the government has caused the Department of Polytechnic Education and Community College (JPPKK), The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) to take a serious step in providing e-Learning platform facilities that following the needs of the Malaysian Polytechnic, namely Learning Management System (LMS) known as Curriculum Information Document Online System (CIDOS) and Polytechnic Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) to enable interaction during online teaching and learning to occur with the purpose is to produce students who are competitive and support DePAN 2.0 and the 9th Leap in MEB (HE). As for now, we have finished the first and second phases of the MEB (HE). Phase 1 for the year 2015 emphasizes aspects of blended learning or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) as well as developing and updating e-learning guidelines. Phase 2 aimed in the year 2016 until 2020 is to strengthen the pedagogical approach and process online learning content development as well as intensifying the use of MOOCs among higher education institutions and improving e-learning infrastructure. While the last phase is focusing on reviewing existing initiatives as well as recommending new implementations to further improve efficiency and effectiveness. It is amazing as the end of the second phase forces all education institutes to implement online teaching and learning to the full force not just in Malaysia but all the educational organizations around the globe due to COVID-19 (Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina, & Bruce, 2020).

Similarly, Covid-19 has compelled academic experts to reconsider and change their traditional way of face to face learning and consider the option of distance learning as a better option to fill the emptiness of the classroom for a duration of three to four months, and as such, it will reduce the risk of infection for students before conventional activities are resumed (Kaur, 2020).

As a result of the implementation of online learning worldwide, it has been considered among the best method of education due to its advantages such as cost-effective, helps compensate for scarcities of academic staff (Arkorful, V., & Abaidoo, N. (2015), its flexibility of time and place of usage (Smedley,2010), a higher degree of interactivity among lecturers and students and easier study material coverage (Wagner,2008) which affirmed by (Radovic,2010), it also increases satisfaction and decreases the stress of students because each student may study at their own pace and able to repeat the lectures uploaded online (Codone, 2001; Amer, 2007; Urdan and Weggen, 2000; Algahtani, 2011; Marc, 2002; Klein and Ware, 2003). It is important to be noted that for online learning to be effective, that internal factors of students such as positive attitude and external factors such as infrastructure greatly influence the effectiveness of e-learning (Najib, H. M., Bakar, N. R. A., & Othman, N. (2017).

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement for this research is as follows:

The sudden drastic change of PdP or teaching method from face-to-face learning to online learning especially for co-curricular activities. Are students prepared for the following changes? Do they enjoy online learning? Are the students having enough internet accessibility to perform online classes? Can they perform tasks and assessments via online learning? All of this can be specified through the research objective below.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The researcher main objectives are to get the students' perception towards:
1) To explore student's perception towards the readiness of learning via online method
2) To explore students online class accessibility
3) To explore material and assignment delivery for co-curricular activities

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was analyzed using the Statistical system Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 22.0. To answer the question the researcher has used descriptive statistics to answer demographic questions which are to explain the background of the respondents, and to get the students' perspectives about co-curricular activities via online learning using mean analysis. A set of questionnaires is an adaptation from Muhammad Adnan and Kainat Anwar (2020). The instruments are closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires. Furthermore, the analysis is using mean, frequencies, and percentage only.

5.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Findings of the study based on test results and the response were given by the respondents to the questionnaire. The results of the study submitted are to elaborate the answer to the research question is The Compulsory Co-curricular Activities Via Online Learning Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Students' Perspectives. The questionnaire has been distributed to the 128 students from Politeknik Metro Johor Bahru who take co-curricular courses which are from Diploma in Entrepreneurship (DEN 3), Diploma Logistics and Supply Chain Management (DLS 3), Diploma in Islamic Banking & Finance (DIB 3). Unfortunately, only 80 students answered the survey completely.

Demographic Factors

The demographic factor can be described as female is 52 students (65%) and male is 28 students (35%). All respondents in semester 3 for the program DEN 3 are 24 students (30%), DLS 3B is 23 students (28.8%), DLS 3A is 22 students (27.5%), DIB 3 is 11 students (13.8%). All of them joined five types of co-curricular courses which are DRK 3132 MESRA ALAM is 28 students (35%), DRK 3092 KEUSAHAWANAN is 24 students (30%), DRK 3032 BAHASA INGGERIS is 15 students (18.8%), DRK 3022 AUDIOVISUAL is 12 students (15%), MPU 24011 PING PONG is 1 student (1.3%).

Most of the 61 (76.3%) respondents have medium skills in technology devices that can operate computers, laptops, or smartphones, then 18 respondents which are (22.5%) have advanced skills and only 1 person is poor technology skills. For online learning, there are 76 respondents involved in class during online learning which contributes to 95%, and 72.5% preferred doing online learning at home.

Students' Perception

Most respondents mentioned that they are enthusiastic and passionate about having online learning which contributes to 72.5 %. Therefore, it has been supported by the statistic given and extracts by the table below based on the highest mean only:

Table 1. Method of Learning

ITEM	MEAN
I prefer online classes for the co-curricular course	3.6500
Online classroom learning for co-curricular courses is even more exciting	3.6000
I am more focused on online learning for co-curricular courses	3.6000

Table 2. Accessibility to Online Class

ITEM	MEAN
Device used	3.6000
Signal strength during online learning	3.5375
Sufficiency of Internet Data	3.3125

Table 3. Material and Assignment Delivery for Co-Curricular Activities

ITEM	MEAN
It is easy to complete group projects/assignments digitally	3.7375

6.0 DISCUSSION

In the new millennium that prioritizes lifelong learning skills, there is no choice but to take advantage of online educational technology and applications. The current educational context requires teachers and students to master and have communication and information technology (ICT) literacy. In terms of education, schools, and institutes of higher education (IPT) also change the method implementation of education to fully online. Most public universities have strategies and alternatives to face-to-face learning practices online which are considered the best option in dealing with situations that threaten the atmosphere of this learning (Muniroh Hamat, Siti Balqis Mahlan, Ch'ng Pei Eng, 2020).

Moreover, they mention that instructions by the Ministry of Higher Education are complied with so that they are not implemented face-to-face lectures for the safety of students and lecturers, instead of taking advantage of Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Therefore, lecturers also use all their creativity to interact with students even remotely. This is the time for the lecturer to apply only their abilities and creativity if this teaching and learning process took place successfully.

Learning Method

In this regard, researchers want to get students' perceptions of online learning for co-curricular courses which are usually implemented in groups, need to be faced to face, and is it easy to perform assignments

online for this course. This study proves that students are prepared for changes in the method of learning which is online learning methods can be implemented even for co-curricular courses where they state that 'I prefer online classes for the co-curricular course', 'Online classroom learning for co-curricular courses is even more exciting' and 'I am more focused on online learning for co-curricular courses'.

Students ready for online classes and are also excited about the changes made to teaching methods where active student involvement is needed during online classes to ensure the class is attractive and indirectly abolish the chalk and talk method. Therefore, they are more focused, and all the activities done in the platform can be checked on time and corrective action can be taken immediately. Several platforms such as Microsoft Teams, CIDOS, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Webex, WhatApps, Telegram, and many more can be used and helpful in implementation.

Online Class Accessibility

To perform online learning, internet access should also be taken into account to avoid the existence of equality gaps in access to education for certain students who have no access to technology (Antonius Setyawan Sugeng Nur Agung1, Monika Widyastuti Surtikanti, and Charito A. Quinones, OP3, 2020). Therefore, the first thing that a lecturer must confirm is students' accessibility to join the online classes. When students alert that there is no more face-to-face method or offline class, they must prepare a device to do the online class, for example, laptop, computer, or smartphone so they can access the platform. Second, student's areas must have good internet connections, especially in their homes or neighborhood because if there is no signal or low connection then disruption during online learning will drive them to stress. Students also must be prepared for the sufficiency of internet data. This is because of the prolonged use of data to join online classes, many courses are taken, and uploading all assessments online.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, 58% of students are using a laptop as a device of online learning and 85.2% opined that their device is compatible for them to learn online, 84% of students have internet access at their home and 67.9% of students have the sufficient internet data for online learning. This shows that their economic background is at a medium level allowing them to have sufficient devices and the ability to pay for internet usages. Only 54.3% of students have a stable signal strength during online learning which shows the quality of the internet provider which affirms the report of the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) where household access to the internet increased by 3.1 percent points to 90.1 percent in 2019 compared to 87.0 percent in 2018. It is hoped that internet stability will continue to increase in the coming year.

Material and Assignment Delivery for Co-Curricular Activities

Using online platforms such as CIDOS or Microsoft teams used as a PdP medium is a very good effort then students can make a discussion and group assignment online and easily submit assignments online or digitally. There is no longer the old way in which assignments should be printed and delivered to lecturers. This makes it easier for students who live far from PMJB, it saves money, is paperless, and avoids exposure to Covid 19.

Students feel not burdened and stress learning online when the lecturer provides complete information, materials such as notes, exercise, and assignments given are completely explained; it will be revised clearly. Lecturers also give examples, tutorial, or practical via video and YouTube. They also have a Q&A session before ending the class or students can have a WhatsApp group, message, or call the lecturer for more info or discussion personally. The above data can be summarized from the positive percentage of the

questionnaires given in which 87.2% of students opined that it is easy to understand the material given by the lecturer, 97.5% agreed that the notes, material, and assignments given are relevant to the topic and course, 85.2% states that the instruction given by the lecturer is comprehensive and easy to understand during online lessons, 100% agreed that lecturer provided discussion and question and answer session in class, 98.8% agreed that the lecturer gives the appropriate feedback during class.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the majority perspectives of the students, they welcome and fully support the new millennium education changes, PdP online, and new norms that we are implementing. As such, the platform systems developed, especially CIDOS require users to ensure improvements can be made from time to time. This is because, even if the Movement Control Order (MCO) is finally declared to end by the government, the preferred choice of effective learning by most of the students which are 55% is mixed online learning and face-to-face (blended learning). This is because 70.4% of students still preferred face-to-face contact with the instructor. After all, they deemed it is necessary for effective learning. More improvements needed to be made both from the lecturer's and students' perspectives to assist them to complete group projects or assignments digitally. The students still seem to have a vague perspective of full online class because only 45.7% of students have full confidence that complete Polytechnic Diploma courses can be completed effectively through the internet.

In the long run, as the pandemic has no sign to end amid the development and distribution of vaccines and although control over the infection's most harmful effects is expected and limiting its spread can be hoped for, it will likely be a few years before the virus can be brought under control worldwide (Marco, V. (2020). Thus, full cooperation from all top management, educators, students as well as parents is very much needed so that positive results from the new norms of online teaching and learning can be celebrated.

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