ABSTRACT

This study is to investigate the management required for different methods of subject coursework assessment such as quizzes, group exercises and short presentations, midterm-test, assignment and student’ attendance. Furthermore, this study will assess whether the overall subject’s coursework assessment is correlated with a student’s final examination results. The aim of this study is to facilitate and to encourage a student’s active learning, thus enhancing their interest in the subject being taught. It is believed that this method has been traditionally used to help the
students and to challenge them to work harder with more focus in the classroom. The lecturer shall act as a facilitator and observe the progress of each student. The rationale of the subject’s course assessment is to motivate student interest and to sustain their learning performance. The respondents that were studied upon were sampled from a foundation programme at a private institution in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The findings indicated that there were no significant consistencies to reflect that the students’ performances in their final examination results were actually related to the overall subject’s coursework assessment. The findings also show that most students gave good remarks and were satisfied with the application of the subject’s coursework assessment. It is recommended that future research should focus more on how the subject’s coursework assessment method can be improved. This is in order to help students to get better results, improve interest and motivate them to study and attain higher marks in their final examination.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there is a need to equip the lecturers with knowledge on what is subject coursework assessment is all about, as managing a subject’s coursework assessment is not an easy task for the lecturers. This is said due to the need to understand how to manage the subject’s coursework assessment in such a manner that will facilitate positive returns from the students. Assessment is one of the tools used in the educational environment to
evaluate the growth and progress of student learning and the outcome is student achievement. As stated by (Phillips, 2005) the reformation of university teaching requires re-examination of fundamental assumptions about how universities function and consideration of empirical research about how students learn. This study is intended on providing valuable insight on the management of a subject’s coursework assessment in order to a) aid in the assessment of the student capability and b) provide strategies that will aid in enhancing the learning environment. The term “assessment” varies from one institution to another as it depends on the goals that are intended to be achieved. The Higher Learning Commission defines assessment as such; a) provides data or information associated with student learning, b) engages lecturers in analyzing using the data and information to confirm and to improve teaching and learning, c) produce evidence that students are progressing and learning, and d) evaluates whether changes made have improved and have an impact on student learning and effort.

In higher education, an effective educational setting is characterized by high quality teaching based on contemporary views of learning where learner engagement, consideration of context for learning, providing challenges to learners and opportunities for practice are central (Boud & Prosser, 2002). The efficiency and effectiveness of managing the subject’s coursework assessment contributes to student success in learning within the university environment. Bajunid (2011) stated that in the education sector, of all the
paradoxes, learning and teaching paradoxes have to be addressed mindfully, for the core of
power of education rest in its thinkers, scholars, teachers who have opportunities to
exercise leadership for learning through the coherent alignment of profound
understandings of Education Disciplines, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Instruction, and
Assessment.

Furthermore, the majority of the students are highly motivated when encountering lecturers
who are committed, passionate and accurately manage their respective subject matters. As
such, it is thought that one of the key factors in guiding the performance of the students is
the commitment of the lecturers. In most university subjects, the dominant mode on the
delivery of teaching consists of lectures, tutorials, contact during office hours, laboratory
practical sessions and assessment strongly focused on examination (Laurillard, 2002).

However, Ryan and Miyasaka (1995) concluded that the design of the assessment should
be based on the actual situation and according to the students’ ability, and the focus is to
encourage the students to work harder, motivated, have an interest and achieve what they
have desired to learn.

Generally, the student learning skills differ depending on the gender. In this study, the
empirical evidences were examined and discussion made to the following questions;
1. How strong is the correlation of a subject’s coursework assessment on the student’s achievement? The yardstick used in this study is derived from the students final examination result.

2. Is there evidence that student learning is motivated through the relationship between managing the subject’s coursework assessment and final examinations?

3. How high correlated is the qualitative attributes between the students agreement with the assessment?

There is an agreement with many literatures where most researchers look upon the assessment related to the desire for students to achieve in their learning. Nevertheless, this depends from institution to institutions and also on the materials, resources, teaching method and the preparation made by the individual lecturer to instill in students the understanding on the subject being taught. Abdul Said and Mohd Yusof (2011) stated that both innovative, creative teaching and learning method can be more relevant and applicable in countries where the societal and cultural values or norms share the same principles as innovative and creative learning. The assessment is important to be considered by the lecturer in their teaching plan. This is because it gives an encouragement to students in their learning, on the topics that they should focus and learn, and also on how much time engaged to finish a particular learning task in which they have
set out to get good grades. Tests as an assessment are an effective instrument for students to self-assess and monitor their own progress. Harper et.al (2011) stated that the current push to reuse existing learning resources via the use of learning objects as well as efforts to describe educational strategies in consistent notational forms (referred to as design patterns and/or learning designs) are strategies that may encourage academics to implement different and innovate teaching practices. Bajunid (2011) stated that in the quest to acquire knowledge from the vast treasury of educational knowledge, a dedicated teacher or lecturer may learn from the masters several powerful concepts. These concepts if mastered well can change the lives of professional educators, particularly regarding how they look at learning processes which will, when well understood will influence teaching.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to identify the correlation between the subject’s coursework assessment and the student’s final result examination.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data was collected in two parts: Part A, the subject coursework assessment, and Part B, the final examination results. The subject coursework assessment contains four stages of assessment: Stage 1: Attendance, Stage 2: Quiz, Stage 3: Assignment and Stage 4: Mid-Test and the total of the percentage is 40 percent. The final examination results were
Respondents were initially informed that the subject’s coursework assessment contributes to the success of their final examination result. For this study the sample size of 63 students involved came from two (2) classes in the foundation program. The data are recorded and analyzed using statistical software (SPSS version 2.0). Aside from that, qualitative data was also gathered from the written comments as feedbacks from students.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 indicates the gender composition of the respondents.

Table 1: Students Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 1, there are 23 male students and 40 female students. All were 18-19 years of age. This gives a total of 63 respondents surveyed. Table 2, summarizes the descriptive composition of the subject’s coursework assessment which includes; attendance, quizzes, assignments and midterm-test.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Management of Subject Coursework Assessment for the Improvement of Students’ Active Learning in a Private Institution

Tengku Noorainun Tengku Shahdan, Norazzila Shafie and Dr. Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani

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According to Table 2, the total of respondents are 63 students, and the total assessment ranged from a minimum to a maximum of 9 to 36 marks (out of a total of 40 marks), with a mean of 24.0 and a standard deviation of 5.8. Additionally, it was found that in the final exam, the result ranged from a minimum to a maximum of 0.0 to 54.0 (out of a total of 60 marks), with a mean of 29.7 and a standard deviation of 11.7.

Table 3: Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attn</th>
<th>Quiz</th>
<th>Assign</th>
<th>Mid Test</th>
<th>Total Assess</th>
<th>Final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attn</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assign</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid test</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Assess</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 summarizes the correlation between various subject coursework assessment criteria in a matrix format. The results display a weak correlation between the final exam and assignment. It also shows that the correlation between the final exam and quizzes, mid-test, and attendance in decrement order is of the magnitude of 0.56, 0.48, and 0.41,
respectively. As a total, the correlation between total coursework assessment results with final examination result is only 0.60 at best.

Amelia (2011) stated that the qualitative aspect indicates and confirms that the students are seen to be having a lot of autonomy in deciding the progress of their learning. However she added that the instructor need not be in control all the time. She indicated that in the classroom scenario, the classroom lecturer should act as an instructor, play an important and active role. The findings highlight that the instructor's roles are categorized into four different aspects: pedagogical, social, managerial and technical. Amelia (2011) also added that the instructor is more of a facilitator of improvement in this community rather than a driver for improvement (creating self-propelling students rather than spoon-feeding students). Furthermore, lecturers and the students should have a very strong bonding and collaborative relationship in the learning environment for the success of students in understanding the subject and achieving university’s goal in creating successful students. In a learning process, both parties must know how to play their roles to ensure what they want is achieved. Beside lecturer act as instructor, they should also facilitate the learning process, thereby, helpings their students in becoming more independent and less reliant on the spoon-fed mentality.

5. THE QUEST OF STUDENT FEEDBACK
The feedbacks from students were generally positive as they were pleased to get their result immediately. This is as such because they can utilize these results to improve and reflect on their mistakes. Some students seem to be more aware on the importance on the implementation of the coursework assessment. This group of students also tends to have a higher degree of motivation in order to achieve better scholastic results. They were also more self-driven in terms of understanding the right concepts that were being taught. Lecturers have become more understanding that this method of ‘formative feedback’ assessment as it is something that will benefit the students in the long run. Formative assessment is conducted while learning is occurring or forming to inform teachers about students’ weaknesses and strengths (Stiggins & Chappius, 2005a). In addition to that formative highly prioritizes improvement, and enhances learning.

In concurrence with Brown (2004) the following statement is quoted upon:

“*If assessment is to be integral to learning, feedback must be at the heart of the process. Even though it is time consuming, I would argue that significant energy must be devoted to helping students to understand not only where they have gone wrong, but also what they need to do to improve. They also need feedback when they have done well, to help them understand what is good about their work and how they can build on it and develop further. No one can pretend this is an easy task.”*
One of the questions asked to the students was if they were ready to have continuous stream of coursework assessments in their study. Surprisingly, 89% of the students responded confidently that they were ready and willing to do it. Most of the students were also eager to know their results at the end of the test. This indicates that some students welcomed and were willing to participate as long as the course marks aided in indicating their scholastic direction as well as contributing to their capability in tackling the final examinations. Students felt that assessment gave them active in learning. Students’ comments are quoted in the followings:

Student A:

“The quizzes are very important for me to test the understanding about the subject. It is very helpful in my exam for the carryover marks and knowing my weakness in the subject overall. It is easy for me to do revision for the next exam. I am satisfied with my quizzes result.”

Student B:

“I satisfied with all the assessments marks, as helps me to understand the subject and remember the answer for every question.”
Furthermore, it also helps me to get more marks and will get good grades for the final exam.”

Student C:

“….the assessment especially repeated quizzes are important….apart from that test my knowledge on a certain chapter rather than studying everything…furthermore, I am not stressed when doing it because I did my revision almost every day.”

Student D:

“The quiz, group work presentation gave me a chance to understand the subject better. It is also a good way to improve myself, make me serious to do more exercises….the lecturer’s feedback is good, where I knew where my mistakes and encourages me to study hard and learn from the mistakes…”

From a qualitative standpoint, it seems that learning interest is positively correlated with achievement for many of the students. The coursework assessment actually supports student’s ability to be more effective and efficient scholastically. Assessment is a process of observing students whereby teachers collaborate with their students to collect and interpret data of students’ interests and preferences (Carter, 2005). Several students
admitted feeling in control and more focus in their learning and understand better of the subject taught when they are assessed. In addition, assessments also transform the learning and teaching process into one that is interactive in nature (Black & William, 1998). Furthermore, assessment is conducted because it enables lecturers to be able to understand and familiarize with the development and problems that are faced by their students. Based on that, lecturers can propose measures something to facilitate the solving of the problems faced by students to meet their learning needs. Lecturer roles obviously should more proactive to ensure learning takes place in the classroom.

6. CONCLUSION

This study is expected to contribute to any existing studies on managing the subject coursework assessment. The foundation programs in private universities should focus more on how to motivate students to learn rather than spoon-feeding education to them. This will create an environment whereby students are able to take the initiative and autopilot themselves towards achieving better scholastic results. Such improved mentality will also make the students understand the nature of university environment on teaching and learning. Foundation students are better candidates to show this mindset as foundation programmes at private universities are considered as their fundamental level of university education and thus would allow room for educators to mileage and gear their minds towards autonomous and self-propelled learning; utilizing coursework assessment
as a tool to measure individual capability and form plans to improve scholastic achievement. In conclusion, students should ultimately not fear the looming assessment term and harness it positively to improve individual performance. The ability to self-propel oneself to mentally forge forward academically is seen to be more important than expecting the system to drive education directly; thus shifting the roles of educators towards facilitating education rather than driving education directly.

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