LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS HYBRID TEACHING APPROACH

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Abstract

Traditional learning is still considered as the most common method of delivery and learning by teachers and students. However, Hybrid Teaching (HT) or also known as blended teaching has made its way through as one of the techniques that educators in the 21st-century are encouraged to bring to fruition to enhance teaching and learning processes. A total of 6 Malaysian lecturers from Faculty of Education and Humanities took part in this study as the participants. The main objective of this qualitative study was to identify the lecturers' perceptions towards HT approach**.** The researchers chose semi-structured interview as the research instrument for the data collection. Overall, the findings of this study revealed that the lecturers had positive perceptions towards HT approach. The recommended future research is to conduct quantitative or mixed-method studies on the lecturers' perceptions towards HT approach. Furthermore, only one research instrument was used in this study. As such, the researchers suggest more research instruments to be employed in the future studies.

Keywords: hybrid teachingapproach, technology, traditional learning, perception.

Introduction

The implementation of technology in education context has gained a lot of advantages from the experts in higher education institutions in Malaysia. This corroborated the results from the studies conducted by (Puteh&Hussin, 2007; Azizan, 2010; Siew-Eng, Ariffin& Rahman, & Leong, 2010; and Embi, 2011) (as cited in Karimi & Ahmad, 2013), who concluded that Malaysian higher education institutions that had implemented HT (Hybrid Teaching) and HL (Hybrid Learning) approach had progressively attracted a high level of interest and support. Many of the upcoming and prestigious educational institutions have started to roll its ball by introducing this approach as a tool in aiding the lecturers in the field of education. Incorporating technology into classrooms ensured that students were hooked to the lesson, emboldened individual learning, improved engagement, and longer retention. Besides, technology tools have allowed educators to carry out teaching not only in the four

walls of the classroom but also, out of classrooms.

Technological tools had been implemented long ago and educators were solely dependent on laptops, Ipads, and blogs in order to make teaching and learning in the traditional context more productive. However, with emergence of HT those who were totally dependent on technological tools in order to aid the teacher-centred delivery decided to implement physical and virtual approaches. Proponents strongly agreed on the potential of this approach for the upcoming generations in making a productive and flexible teaching and learning approach. With the introduction of this approach, HT managed to make its way through as one of the approaches that educators would prefer to depend on. This is because of the extra access to information; a variety of in-class exercises and assignments can be provided by the lecturer before the class begins and students are also able to study and prepare themselves at their own pace without any pressure.

Based on the study that was carried out by Garrison & Vaughan, 2008 (as cited in Djiwandono, 2018), HL approach had gained a great influence relating to learning experience and it also facilitated in minimizing expenses. Besides, Guzer& Caner, 2014 (as cited in Djiwandono, 2018), argued that since the advent of HL in the early period of 2000, the debates among educators had revolved around the effectiveness of HL and traditional instruction. From the study that was carried out by (Arancón, Bárcena, &Arús, 2012) and (Alseweed, 2013) (as cited in

Djiwandono, 2018), the research generated results that indicated positive impact of HL on learning progress. It was claimed that this approach provided students with the chance to participate in a wide array of activities that could reinforce their cooperation skills and strengthened bonds. Today, practitioners, educators, stakeholders, researchers, students, and parents believe in the significance of HT in altering the teaching and learning methods from the tedious and stodgy face-to-face learning to a more modernized and nouveau approach in ensuring that the students were aligned with 21st-century teaching. The world is flourishing in all aspects and the education context should not be left behind as from time to time we face challenges especially in terms of economic downfall. If students are not equipped with the latest technological tools, practices and approaches, it would be very difficult to get a job as they are not holistically moulded from the aspects that are prominent in the working life. As such, it is best to equip our future leaders of the country with sufficient knowledge to be able to overcome unnecessary conflicts. Other than that, higher education institutions should also move away from spoon-feeding the students and make full use of technology to allow individualized or self-directed teaching.

Literature Review

Based on a study by Wang, 2008, Means et al., 2009, and Collopy & Arnold, 2009, it was reported that there was a lack of practical research in HL approach stressing on teacher's education platforms. Even though the current study on teachers' preparation had aimed on designing HL

experiences, assessing the enhancement of learners' content knowledge and gratification, and in developing online learning tools, a few of the published researches had investigated tutors' views on employing HL in teacher preparation programmes. Mortera-Gutierrez, 2006; Oh & Park, 2009; &Ocak, 2011 (as cited in Kang, 2014), demonstrated the attitudes of educators who had designed and implemented HL courses in erudition. In a study by Higgins, 2003 (as cited in Chigona&Chigona, 2010), mentioned that one of the main aims for assimilating ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in the education platform was to upgrade the pedagogical techniques and thus enhancing the quality of the instruction. This claim was supported by Gimbert&Cristol, 2004 (as cited in Sağlam&Sert, 2012), uncovered that the incorporation of technology had affected teachers' views and lessons planning.

Similarly, Pinkman, 2005; Seitzinger, 2006; Song & Chan, 2008, Sun, 2009; Supyan et al., 2009; Supyan, 2011 (as cited in Zarei & Al-Shoubl, 2013), agreedon the employment of weblog as an instructional tool in the classroom. These mentioned studies provided a deeper comprehension on benefits and hiccups in the utilization of weblogs in teaching. Zarei & Al-Shoubl, 2013 explored Malaysian students' achievement of technology and internet-enhanced instruction and learning contexts in forming positive attitudes. The respondents comprised of 88 second-year undergraduate learners who were picked from 5 various departments at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and data

were obtained through questionnaires. The findings indicated that the students had positive perceptions in employing Internet as a learning medium, enough fundamental knowledge of the Internet, and reported the learning context to be supportive when employed the Internet as a learning tool.

According to Koo (2008), most of the studies focused on how the insufficiency of the framework and accessibility to technology influenced the employment of ICT in apprenticeship. Nevertheless, according toDeCorte, 1990; Becker, Ravitz, & Wong, 1999; Pelgrum, 2001; Becta, 2003, there were situations where the framework was accessible, but only a few of the academicians had productively incorporated ICTs in the transmission of the syllabus. Similarly, Chou (2010) claimed that the emergence of ICT in language teaching had spread its wings for language academicians to be able to build a more engaged and student-centred classroom. Furthermore, Pearson, et al., 2005; Gulek, et al., 2005; Choy, et al., 2009; Horn, et al., 2011; Light, et al., 2011; Jethro et al., 2012 (as cited in Alharthi, 2016), believed that integration of technology in the classroom has a positive influence on learners and educators. Equally important, based on the research by Derntl&Motschnig-Pitrik, 2005 (as cited in Alebaikan, 2010), HL approach had a plus point only when it was aided by academicians with good rapport skills, followed by dependable and uncomplicated use of technology.

Similarly, Chih-Chien, Hsu & Fang, (2005) andFageeh, (2011) believed that the approval and utilization of Virtual

Learning Environment (VLE) is beneficial for the educators and students' experiences. Besides, Liaw (2007) andAldosari&Mekheimer(2013)demonstrated that those who were more welcoming towards the VLE setting and online teaching had portrayed positive goals in the employment of the equipment to be part of their instruction and learning processes. Along the same lines, Oh & Park (2009) discovered that majority of the academicians who taught HL programmes had good perceptions towards HL, due to improvement in the teaching quality. In addition, a study by Kuzu, 2007 (as cited in Zarei &Al-Shboul, 2013), explored the effect of programme weblogs in scaffolding teaching and maintaining social interaction by employing the semi-structured interview.The respondents of the study consisted of 30 learners from the Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technologies at Anadolu University in Turkey. The data obtained revealed positive results towards the pre-service academicians' perceptions on the employment of blogs as an instructional medium. Furthermore, the findings also reported that the usage of blogs enhanced their interaction with their course mates and the mentor. In addition, Zarei and Supyan (2016) believed that technology plays a significant role in providing an environment for the students to exchange their tasks, thoughts, ideas and suggestions with each other.

Harbi (2016) stated that self-efficacy, satisfaction, effectivity, and framework gratification have positive influence on the utilization of Learning Management System (LMS). Additionally,

in Lee (2006) and Roca &Gagné(2008) mentioned that the participants of their study had positive influences on integrating e-learning technologies in the classroom. In a study by Keengwe& Kang (2012), it was analysed how teacher candidates employed virtual discussions for pursuing their learning beyond the bounds of traditional learning. Theydiscovered three studies that reconnoitred swapped physical session with virtual modules (as cited in Khine&Lourdusamy, 2003; H. Lin, 2008; Collopy & Arnold, 2009). As a substitute in offering assignments or online forums, these studies demonstrated that researchers constructed online modules to allow teacher candidates to learn on their own without the need to meet physically.Zarei &Supyan (2014) demonstrated that weblogs offered language learners the space to employ language actively and thus they would be galvanized to utilize the language by taking advantage of the virtual communication through weblogs. Similarly, a study by Rivens, 2010 (as cited in Zarei &Supyan, 2014),showed that communications through the blogs granted for effective and opinionated interactions.

Furthermore, based on a studycarried out by Khine&Lourdusamy(2003), it was deduced that teachers were contented with HL approach. This was because the online modules restrained them from meeting physically and offered the participants the opportunities to take charge of their learning. They stated that HL programme enhanced teachers' positive perceptions towards the approach and strengthened their understanding and capabilities in

employing virtual modules. However, the advancement and powerfulness of technology alongside with its productive enforcement solely relied upon its consumers who had positive perceptions towards the technology, an adequate level of vocational skill for instruction and learning as was portrayed in a study by Wu, Tennyson, & Hsia (2010). Besides, Davis, Bagozzi, &Warshaw, (1992) imparted a sufficient level of inborn motivation and Teo, Lim, & Lai (1999) and Roca &Gagné (2008) stressed on external motivation. According to Harbi (2016), the emergence of Information and Network Technology (INT) increased the chances for adoption and applying (VLEs).

Nevertheless, past studies by Goodwin, et al. (1993);Hirschbuhl(1994); Wolcott (1997) and Campbell (2001) recommended that motivation level in utilizing ICT for instruction has been stressed as a vital element in the approval of the technology in higher education environments. Furthermore, in a study by Hirschbuhl(1994); Campbell (2001); and Rosenberg (2001), showed that positive perceptions in utilization of ICT has been acknowledged as an important sign whether an educator should contemplate in using e-learning as a replacement for traditional classroom learning settings. Similarly, based on a study explored by Abdullah, et al. (2006) andLiaw, et al. (2007), it was disclosed that educators with positive perceptions regarding VLE technology had the opportunity to participate in e-teaching. In a study by Jones 2001; Dashtestani, 2012 (as cited in Dashtestani, 2014), it was reported that the effective employment of technology in

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) demanded educators' positive perceptions. In this research, the educators voiced out their predilection for the implementation of hybrid instruction compared to online teaching. In the same vein, based on a study by Dashtestani (2014), it was reported that teachers' inclination for the execution of HT repeated the findings in the previous studies by (Bijeikienė, Rašinskienė, &Zutkienė 2011; Hampel & Hauck, 2004; Murday, Ushida, & Chenoweth, 2008).

The findings from a study by Harbi (2016) validated that educators were ready to employ VLE in order to facilitate their instructional tasks. Adding on, the findings also offered proof that majority of the teachers were motivated in utilizing VLE technology as a delivery approach in their online course works and considering that VLE can be a productive instructional tool. In the same vein, Mai &Muruges (2018) explored the perceptions of primary school Science teachers regarding the employment of Frog VLE in instruction and learning. The results demonstrated that science academicians had fair-minded perception in relation to the utilization of Frog VLE which is an aspect of ICT. Nevertheless, the results obtained from Mai, 2015, Angadi, 2013, and Singh, 2012 (as cited in Mai &Muruges, 2018), were not aligned with the findings of a study by Mai &Muruges (2018) who declared that science teachers demonstrated positive views about ICT. Based on a study by Hussien, 2015 (as cited in Mai &Muruges, 2018), despite of completing Frog VLE coaching, there were a huge number of educators who were unsuccessful in

employing it in their day-to-day lessons and learning process. However, Hussien, 2015 (as cited in Mai &Muruges, 2018), stressed in the study about Frog VLE that only a few of the academicians had bad perceptions regarding the employment of Frog VLE. This could be due to tasks at hand, time consumption, and bad Wi-Fi accessibility. Muruges& Mai (2018) also showed that the male and female teachers had similar perceptions towards Frog VLE.

Methods

A qualitative research design was employed in this study. The sampling technique that was employed in this study was purposive sampling. The researchers chose this form of sampling because it focused on specific traits that the desired population portrayed, which was also the goal of this research.The sample for this study consisted of 6 Malaysian lecturers from the Faculty of Education and Humanities from UNITAR International University, Malaysia. It is a government-linkeduniversity in Kuala Lumpur and HT approach has been used in all the programmes offered in the university. The respondents were from different fields of education; Early Childhood Education and English Language Communication. Besides, they were senior lecturers and have been in the education line for the past 10 years. In order to elicit the participants' opinions in the form of spoken, the research instrument that was used in this study was a set of semi-structured interview. This form of interview was carried out in order to elicit the respondents' perceptions and experiences in employing HT approach in their lessons.

Furthermore, the researchersused the semi-structured interview to obtain reliable data and to embolden the respondents in providing relevant comments on the interview questions. The questions targeted on lecturers' perceptions on HT approach. The qualitative data were analysed using the content analysis technique. The responses were audio-recorded and transcribed accordingly.

Results and Discussion

The data were obtained via semi-structured interviews in order to explore the lecturers' views towards HT approach. Based on the data gathered by the researchers, it was discovered that all respondents had positive perceptions towards HT. One of the lecturers mentioned that HT is an effective approach to be employed by all the educators as it helps the educators to organize their teaching and learning materials. The respondentswere very delighted with the implementation of HT. As was revealed by them, in order to exalt active learning among students, HT is an effective approach to be utilized by all the educators. According to their responses, the approach offers learners the opportunity to take charge of their learning. Based on the feedback by another respondent, it was highlighted that HT is just another way of teaching where the educators do not only utilize the chalk and talk approach, but also employ various platforms to enhance the teaching and learning process in the class. As such, the respondentsclaimed that HT is an effective approach to be utilized by educators. The respondents' feedback areas follows:

R (1) "For me, HT is an effective approach to be employed by all educators. It aids educators in managing their instructional tasks, my teaching and learning materials. Since HT is an online and face-to-face approach, so definitely there is an online platform where we can upload our materials. So, it also gives educators to upload their teaching and learning materials without misplace them. Like for example, UNITAR has UNIEC VIRTUAL. So, this platform is actually for us to upload all the materials. So, it's easy to manage. No worries that my materials will go missing. It is also cost-effective as I do not have to waste money preparing materials. I can use the technological and online educational learning tools".

R (2) "Based on my opinion, HT approach is an effective approach to be employ by the educators in order to enhance active learning. Compared to traditional approach, which is teacher-centred, HT is a more student-centred kind of learning. They take charge of their learning. But, we as educators are there to guides them. We act as facilitator. So, I like the approach very much".

R (5) "To me, HT is just another way of 21st century way of teaching which can take place either within the four walls of the classroom or out of the classroom. This approach does not only employ the chalk and talk which is the traditional way of teaching but also using other platforms to enhance the teaching and learning process between an educator and the students. So, for me, it is an effective approach to be employed by educators".

Based on the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, it can be concluded that majority of the respondentshad positive views towards HT approach. Based on the findings, the researchers discovered that majority of the respondents perceived HT as a fun, effective, efficient, and an engaging approach as it smoothens the way for educators to manage their instructional tasks and strengthened the teaching and learning process. Other than that, it was discovered that flexibility is ranked as the top advantage in the employment of hybrid programme in the classes. The findings of this study were in line with the study carried out by Kocoglu, Ozek, &Kesli (2011). Majority of the respondents' feedback were positive. Generally, it was revealed that HL approach was advantageous, motivating, and helpful because the academicians were able to share and discuss opinions.

Besides, it was reported that the hybrid programme offered the lecturers accessibility and malleability, such as flexibility to adjust their classes according to their work schedules and completing the programme at their own pace. In addition, the respondents stated that the programme also supported their professional development as lecturers. Overall, the findings demonstrated that hybrid programme provided a broad and proportionate learning context to the face-to-face programme. The findings of a study by Poon (2013) also indicated that the main benefit of integrating HL is programme pliability. HL accommodated students with a wide variety of learning methods, programme accessibility needs, and advanced programme pacing options.

In fact, the findings from this research provided an understanding that can be effective to supplement courses offered by the faculty.

Johnson & Marsh (2014) also stated that HL created more enjoyable face-to-face classes. It was reported that in HL context, classes were more engaging than traditional teaching environment and even bookless classes can be conducted. Along the same lines, Dashtestani (2014) explored Iranian EFL teachers' views on the enforcement of online EFL instruction. The results recommended that even though Iranian EFL teachers embraced fairly positive attitudes towards the implementation of online instruction, a large number of the respondents favoured hybrid instruction compared to online instruction. Other than offering learner-to-lecturer interaction and discussion, student-to-student interaction and discussion, reduced passive listening and increased active learning and a greater sense of connection, it also allowed participants to apply various technological and online educational learning tools. The approach claimed to intensify active learning and facilitated the teaching and learning process between an educator and the students.

It was also imparted that HT is a flexible approach and not a boring way of teaching as it aided the respondents in coming up with new teaching approaches and allowed respondents to teach through multifarious technology-enhanced activities such as discussion forums, blogs, forums, Twitter, and interactive whiteboards. The findings of this study were similar to the the results of a study by Benson, Anderson, &Ooms (2011) who reported that majority of the respondents commented that they often employed different teaching approaches. Findings from the study also portrayed that a prevailing viewpoint of HL as utilizing multifarious tools and techniques in the delivery of the module. Despite of the negative feedbacks received from the respondents towards the challenges of HL, a large number of them portrayed positive views towards the advantages of technology-enabled HL in offering interesting teaching opportunities as well as accommodating to multifarious learning styles.

The results from this study is in line with a study by Sardegna&Dugartsyrenova (2014) who concluded that the respondents discovered that the technology-enhanced activities were useful for creating a connection between theory and practice, strengthening critical thinking, and encouraging professional development. Additionally, despite of technology-related threats and priorities for coursework activities, the data gathered also showed that the respondents claimed that the technology-enhanced tasks offered opportunities for diverse and enhanced interactions, peer review and reflection, facilitated in promoting self-individualized learning and developed a sense of belonging to the students. Besides modelled for effective technology uses, it also cultivated an appreciation for technology-enhanced practices. The results from the current study also commensurate the study explored by Johnson & Marsh (2014) who

demonstrated that the participants of the study were certain that technology will not take over their duties but to provide support in their teaching. On the contrary, the respondents of the current study were well familiarized with HT approach. However, based on a study by Ying & Yang (2017), HT approach was a new term for the academicians. Similarly, a study by Tshabalala, Ndereya, & Merwe (2014) demonstrated that some of the lecturers and Head of Departments portrayed scant or no understanding of the approach.

However, based on the results gathered and analysed for this study, only one participant disclosed a negative feedback towards HT approach. This findings of this study is equivalent to the similar findings by Sardegna&Dugartsyrenova (2014) which reported that technology-enhanced activities cannot and should not substitute practical or hands-on experiences, such as constructing, enforcing, and observing or even chances for reviews on apprenticeship, which were persistently ranked higher than course tasks based on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The negative findings from the current study were further backed up by Sardegna&Dugartsyrenova (2014) study that supported the significance of providing traditional and virtual course elements. Similarly, a study by Tshabalala, Ndereya, & Merwe (2014) also indicated that even though majority of the respondents revealed that they employed computers for certain activities such as research and in-class-face-to-face presentations, it was uncovered by the

participants that they could not employ the HL approach due to the environment they were in.Overall, the findings revealed that majority of the respondents had positive perspectives towards HL approach. The results of this study can be related to social constructivism theory as Vygotsky highlighted a few aspects regarding learning process. One of them was learning is first created in a social environment, incorporated, and employed by individuals. Moreover, it aimed at individual's interaction with the society, the impact of social interaction, the language, and learning culture. Learning only occurred when individuals were involved in social tasks, such as communication and cooperation. It was discovered by the researchers that the concepts of Vygotsky's theory were in line with the results. The responses received from the participants also revealed that HT approach offered learner-to-lecturer interaction and discussion, more student-to-student interaction and discussion, reduced passive listening and increased active learning and built a sense of connection between both.

Beside social constructivism theory, the researchers incorporated the Constructivism theory by Piaget. It was discovered by the researchers that the results of the study were aligned with Piaget's concepts in his theory. The theory focused on learning as an active process of creating knowledge based on students' experiences. It is obvious that HT helped in enhancing active learning and learners' performance level in the forums. Other than focusing on self-efficacy which is one of the primary aspects in student's

motivation,it has an impact on learner's selection of tasks, endurance and effort. The theory also aimed at students' experiences based on reality, previous knowledge, psychological forms and opinions, emphasizing knowledge creation and the importance of the environment.

Conclusion

Overall, based on the data analysis carried out, all respondents had positive views towards using HT approach and they perceived HT approach as an effective and efficient approach because it paves the way for educators to manage their instructional tasks. Offering educatorsthe opportunities to apply various technological and online educational learning tools intensifies active learning and facilitates teaching and learning process. It was also imparted that HT is a flexible approach because it allows educators to teach through multifarious mediums such as blogs, forums, Twitter, and interactive whiteboards.

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