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Learning Outside The Classroom: Effects on Student Concentration and Interest

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Abstract

Effective teaching and learning is a catalyst towards achievement and success of students at the tertiary level. The study focuses on effective communication techniques in the context of teaching and learning outside the classroom. The respondents consist of first and third year students from the Communication and Public Policy programme at The School of Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). The main objectives of the research are to identify levels of concentration, to measure learning satisfaction levels and to analyse the quality of learning levels of UKM students towards learning issues. Three major aspects addressed in the survey are Learning Concentration, Learning Satisfaction and Quality of Learning. The data obtained show that in the Learning Concentration aspect, learning with a liked person acquired the highest mean score whereas teacher communication skills and a friendly learning environment acquired the highest mean scores in the aspects of Learning Satisfaction and Quality of Learning respectively.

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1. Introduction

Out-of-class learning is a method of learning that positions students in a context that motivates them to learn. According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2005), this learning method is defined as an organised and structured programme or activity that is conducted outside the classroom. This activity is student-centred and purports to reinforce the implementation of curriculum of a particular learning subject in a progressive learning environment. Out-of-class learning comprises of three domains; knowledge, attitude and skill. These three domains intend to achieve the following objectives: first, to reinforce student understanding of concepts taught in class; second, to provide learning experiences in real-life situations; third, to make learning more meaningful and enjoyable; fourth, to enable students to think and master knowledge through contextualised experiences; fifth, to increase student interest and attitudes to learn; sixth, to expand teamwork and social skills; seventh, to develop skills

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in the collection, processing and analysis of data and information; and eighth, to cultivate wholesome values among the students themselves.

Accordingly, out-of-class learning is a contextualised learning method that brings the student to learn in a particular environment. This environment is selected by the lecturer based on the outlined course objectives. This method not only highlights the concept of the knowledge itself but more importantly relates the concept to the environment or situation where the student is placed hence stimulates student motivation towards learning. Standard methods of teaching such as lecturing, which is seen as abstract, may become more effective if the student senses are stimulated by out-of-class environments.

In this case, respondents consisting of Communication and Public Policy students attended a conference at the Parliament to experience first-hand how policies are enacted and to expose them to communication methods that are used at a conference. The process, theory and concept of public policies were already discussed in class and students therefore have prior knowledge pertaining to public policies and policy enactment before the contextualised learning was conducted at the conference. When placed in context or the real-life situation of policy enactment, the student will try to relate their in-class knowledge to their experience at the Parliament. This approach to learning deduces that the mind will naturally seek contextual meaning related to a person's present environment. This happens through a logical search for correlations that are significant to the individual.

2. Research Findings and Discussion

This research was carried out using the methods of survey and participant observation. A structured questionnaire was developed based on a review of existing literature in which respondents were asked a set of four-point Likert scale questions pertaining to learning concentration, learning satisfaction and quality of learning (Tables 1 to 6). The data were later analysed using SPSS version 15.0 for Windows. Findings of the participant observation conducted are shown in Table 7.

The present study was conducted on 62 students at The School of Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This paper is a preliminary assessment of student interest and attitudes toward out-of-class learning, which is part of a larger study that will end in March 2012. It therefore involves only a portion of the respondents of the larger study.

Table 1. Gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	22.6
Female	48	77.4
Total	62	100.0

The 62 respondents involved in the study comprises 14 males and 48 females (Table 1). They consist of Year 1 and 3 students of the Communication and Public Policy programme from The School of Media and Communication Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. From the 62 respondents, 30 (48.4%) were Year 1 students and 32 (51.6%) were Year 3 students (Table 2).

Table 2. Year of Study

	Frequency	Percentage
Year 1	30	48.4
Year 3	32	51.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 3. Race

	Frequency	Percentage
Malay	48	77.4
Chinese	9	14.5
Indian	2	3.2
Others	3	4.8
Total	62	100.0

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