

Module Information Booklet (MIB) as a Sagacious Learning Effectiveness

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Abstract—An active learner constantly searches for all relevant information that might contribute to an informed learning decision. The course syllabus (MIB) is constructed to guide learning and should be carefully examined as a valuable resource document. Transforming and deliberation to link the subject contents and learning outcomes is crucial in the context of teaching preparation. However, its nobility may not apprehended momentous impact to engage full understanding among the students on how they could connect the pixels between the subject contents at its learning outcomes. The maladroitness to understand the information may result in failure to inculcate the desired graduate attributes. The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand the syllabus information in enhancing the perspicacious of learning effectiveness. The study employed a random sampling of 122 first year undergraduate business degree students whereby the MIB is the initial interaction tools that formally utilized to share. Although the finding indicates some challenges among students to fully understand of the learning outcomes, the available information however helps to manage their time effectively.

Keywords—Campus Environment; Efficient and Effective Teaching Methods; Higher Education; Learning Outcomes; Module Information Booklet; Teaching and Learning Assessment.

Abbreviations—Module information booklet (MIB).

I. INTRODUCTION

THE advancement and transformation in education focuses on students' learning process to understand the learning outcomes. A syllabus can be an important learning tool. It can articulate the goals of general education in addition to the course goals. It can direct student effort and outline expectations for student responsibility for their educational success. The students will indefinitely embark on specific module content by attempting to utilize the relevant syllabus as guidance. Grunert (1997), suggests a model that the syllabus goes beyond the course objectives, course calendar, and course grading to include information on the purpose of the course, additional resources and learning tools that students might use and the procedures on how to use the syllabus. However, the rudimentary question is how many students will read the details comprehensively and precisely in the given document. Perhaps, the more pertinent point is whether all the information given will be utilized and referred to by the students. Incidentally, the complication is whether the MIB or syllabus is just a 'superficial' piece of contract that every lecturer is 'obliged' to prepare.

It is a common practice among new lecturers or young educators to embrace the teaching methods habituated by them as students. Priority in comprehensive explanation of

the learning objectives may be overlooked and it may be realized upon gaining experience in the industry. The main focus has been emphasized in widening of the repertoire of teaching methods among academic staff and utilization of technology in enhancing learning simulation. Bourner (1997) believes that the benefits of teaching and learning diversification may further be value-added if it is accompanied with clear identified learning outcomes with proper references.

Module Information Booklet (MIB) is a guideline that defines the comprehensive structure and content of a course. It designed to illustrate synchronization of programme to specific subject learning outcomes. In addition, it helps to map out clearly how resources (e.g. books, equipment, time) and class activities (e.g. teacher-talk, group work, practical, discussions) and assessment strategies (e.g. tests, quizzes, homework) will be used to ensure that the process of learning meet its objectives of the course successfully. The MIB is usually an interpretation of a specification or syllabus and can be used as a guide throughout the course to monitor progress against the original plan. The MIB is the onset for the learning process whereby it is a pinnacle that can bestow an overview of the module that is being taught [Iqbal & Thuraisingam, 2014].

Therefore, preparation of comprehensive MIB is crucial to ensure the rigorous information of the courses disseminated transparently and clearly understood by the students. Hence, indirectly the MIB will be a platform for various references pertaining to a designed “contract” (refers to acknowledgement of an agreement on course information between lecturer and students) between lecturer and students that they have to fulfill. The nobility aim for MIB may be unachievable if there is lack of evidence of clear understanding and may be partially functioning if the utilization is limited to educators and not absolutely utilized by the students. This can be supported with the study by Parkes & Harris (2002), however, this research applied the term ‘the MIB’ instead of syllabus.

This is an intriguing proposition to identify and analyse the sagaciousness in learning effectiveness among students’ in utilizing the MIB as the tool for learning. It is believed that the use of the MIB will also advocate the students to optimize their learning process and time management, eventually accomplishing an actual transformative learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is fundamental and profound that teachers provide a framework for the course that they will be teaching. Recurrently, the framework is provided to the students through a course syllabus. For learners, the syllabus provides security in knowing the direction and expectations for a particular module [McKeachie, 1978 & 1999]. There may be additional means by which instructors communicate information and convey expectations to students; however, the syllabus provides a written form of communication that lists responsibilities and sets goals for the course. It is quite evident that the syllabus is habitually the most formal mechanism for sharing information with students regarding the course [Eberly et al., 2001].

Bers et al (1996), suggest that the integrity of a syllabus is imperative for administrative purposes because (1) syllabi are explicit public descriptions of courses, (2) they can and often are used as evidence in grievance and judicial hearings, and (3) they are used routinely to determine course equivalency in transfer situations. On the grounds that the syllabus serves these functions, they form a contract between the student and the university. According to McKeachie (1999), the syllabus is organizational and centered around a schedule of assignments, tests, and topics. McKeachie also views the syllabus as a contract, therefore, he recommends that professors listen to student input and consider alternative ways in which students can achieve class goals. His assertion is that "students who have options and a sense of personal control are likely to be more highly motivated for learning".

Literature about assessment and good teaching practices suggests that course syllabi are important for a variety of reasons and the syllabi can be used as indicators of student learning outcomes [Matejkab & Kurke, 1994; Imasuen, 1999]. A profound syllabi identify learning objectives or expected learning outcomes, enumerate topics or subjects to

be covered, and describe the learning activities in which students will engage. Logical syllabi link these so that they are mutually supportive. For example, the objective “to learn to work in teams” in a course that does not include any group assignments is hardly supportable [Imasue, 1999].

Beyond the course outline, thought-provoking statements should be included in the course outline to promote a more learning-centered classroom. Authentic and intriguing questions can drive student learning as students may come away with a sense of how professionals in each discipline investigate important questions in the field [Hayes & Jacob, 1998]. Learning the type of contents and information that the students value in the syllabus might also contribute to its usefulness as an instrument of education. However, the main problem might be students may assume a passive and non-thinking role in receiving information. This is indicative of a traditional view of college teaching. The instructor’s job is to “profess” and the students’ role is to absorb passively [Audi, 1994].

However, omission of information on a syllabus does not mean that students fail to acquire skills and broad knowledge in a course; however, omissions in the syllabi of explicit information pertaining to these areas are flags that prompt further investigation [Bers et al., 2000]. Articles on syllabi development recommend the inclusion of other information [Grunert, 1997] e.g., course outcomes, grading policies, schedules. Most students are at best only slightly aware of the information that is contained in course syllabi [Vodonavich & Piotrowski, 2004-2005]. When students do use the syllabus, they generally look at it just before the start of class and refer to the present weekly assignment or to testing dates [Calhoon & Becker, 2008]. If the syllabus becomes part of the learning process students will use it to meet their learning needs and instructors will value it as an instructional strategy. And the same syllabus can provide a means whereby, the learners’ needs, the instructor’s goals and the administration’s objectives can be met.

In contrast, Bourner (1997) suggests that the search for better ways of achieving particular learning outcomes is better than widening the repertoire of teaching methods without the references which means to diminishing the effectiveness and teaching efficiency. This would be the lead in this study to deeply engage the students with understanding of the modules taught and the learning outcomes. The quality assurance in course design, delivery, and evaluation begins parallel with instructors’ first contact with students [Grunert et al., 2008].

In addition, Matejkab & Kurke (1994) suggest four identified major uses of a syllabus: (1) a contract between the instructor and the students, (2) a communication device that would connect the instructor to the students, (3) an instructional plan for the instructor and (4) a cognitive map for the students. Bers et al., (1996) have focused on accountability, emphasizing the use of the syllabus as an administrative tool for the documentation of teaching effectiveness, which could therefore provide evidence for the accreditation of an institution or the performance evaluation

of its instructors. Finally, Cullen & Harris (2009) claimed that the syllabus might gauge the mindset of the instructor, assessing whether the instructor was influenced by an instructional or a learner-centered paradigm.

The second set of multiplicities concerned itself with content tightly connected to the purpose of the syllabus. One notable exception to the conventional syllabus design, which included course objectives, calendar, and grading, was the learner-centered model [Grunert, 1997]. In the learner-centered model, the content of a conventional syllabus was extended to include learning tools that would help students succeed in the course in addition to a variety of mechanisms that would encourage student engagement in the course and interaction both with the instructor and among themselves [Grunert et al., 2008]. The similar model has been earlier propounded by Parkes & Harris (2002) whereby, the syllabus was an instructional aide and a motivational tool that would extend learning beyond the physical borders of a classroom and continue after the end of the class.

By the same token, a well-designed syllabus can provide information that yield students to become efficacious learners in areas that outstrip the scope of their courses. Predominantly, a learning-centered syllabus will provide information on how to plan for the tasks and experiences of the semester, how to evaluate and monitor performance, and how to allocate time and resources to areas in which more learning is essential. This information can help students develop self-management skills that are valuable beyond the demands of a particular course.

Self-regulated students can then take the timeline explicated in a contractual syllabus and use it to plan and monitor their learning, comparing their performance to the objectives identified by the instructor [Diamond, 1998; Parkes & Harris, 2002; Grunert et al., 2008]. It is presumed that the students are able to distinguish and create a better understanding in every module that they embark upon and the learning outcomes and objectives of every module taught is clearly explained by the lecturer to avoid misconception. When the students are familiar with the objectives and learning outcomes of the modules taught, the lecturer may find it user oriented while imparting the knowledge. This will enable the students to understand the application of each module to their job requirements and scope in future [Iqbal & Thurasingam, 2014].

III. DESIGN AND PROCESS

This research is designed to measure learning effectiveness in utilising MIB. The main contents of MIB such as learning objectives, learning outcomes, subject contents, activities and assessment due dates are crucial information that have been extracted to design questionnaire. In order to be aligned with the university's mission for life-long learning, the academics need to resonate on the learning preparations and students' understanding of the modules. The following model framework was derived based on the research.

Model Framework

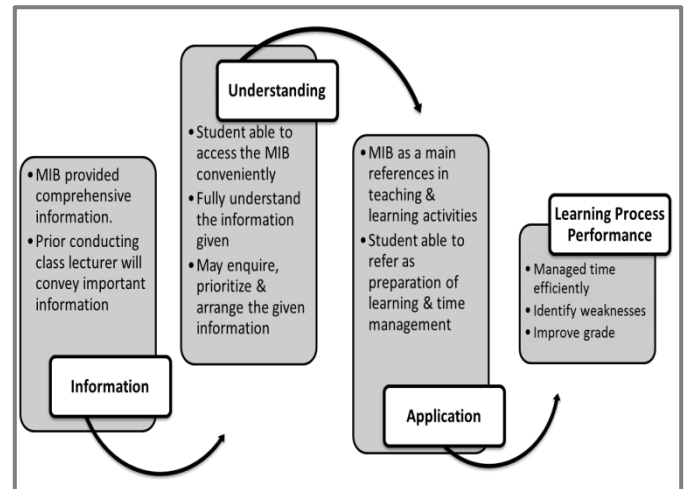


Figure 1: A Model Framework for Performance of Learning Process

The figure above is a simple chronology of learning process performance. It is constructed based on the three components of the study namely information gathered from the MIB by the learners, the level of understanding of the learning outcome and learning objectives as well as the level of application of the components of the MIB to their course of study. The initial setting-up and information delivery by the lecturers have enabled the students to set a level of preparedness of the module concerned as the students have acquired pertinent insights of the topics, learning outcome, relevant activities, assessments and specific deadlines. Easy accessibility and clear information will conjure better understanding of the module activities. This will assist the students in prioritising the information acquired to organize and gear up for the module. Hence, it will escalate the students' capability in the application of the contents of the module to ameliorate a taxonomic learning process. This has been discussed further in the analysis below [Iqbal & Thurasingam, 2014].

Thus, it can be concluded using a simple equation that,

$$Learning = \alpha + \beta_1 Info_1 + \beta_2 Understand_1 + \beta_3 Apply_1 + \epsilon$$

Data

The research employed the survey strategy whereby questionnaires were distributed to gather quantitative data on the participants' perceptions and other information related to the research objectives. The sample based on 122 first year undergraduate students and the respondents for this study were selected through a convenience sampling.

The questionnaire consists three parts of questions for MIB user, (1) Information of the MIB, (2) Discussion of MIB and (3) The utilisation of MIB in learning process. This study has demonstrated descriptive analysis to highlight the perception in utilizing the MIB to determine the level of preparedness. To measure the level of improved learning process, regression analysis is used to indicate their relationship.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The comprehensive efforts by lecturers in compiling important information as such MIB to comprehend its benefits to students may not be achieved if students' perception is not in tandem with the understanding and application of this as a tool for learning.

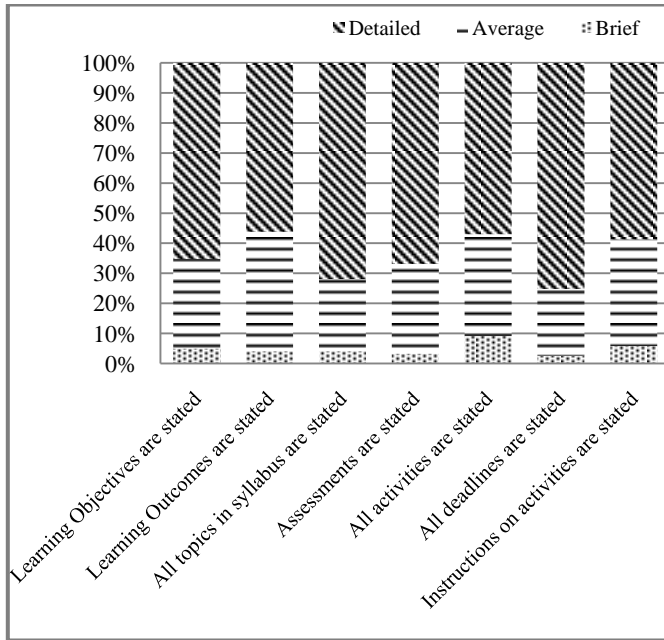


Figure 2: Perception of the Student's on the Depth of MIB Information

Figure 2 illustrates the depth of information inserted in MIB as a proper guidance throughout the semester. More than 95 per cent of the students agreed that the provided information sufficiently informative and half of them agreed that they have received detailed information. In other words, crucial components such as learning objectives, learning outcomes, subject contents and assignment due date are included and have been explained clearly. This aligned with [Matejkab & Kurke, 1994] which has suggested four important components in syllabus.

Table 1: Discussion of MIB throughout Semester

Discussion of MIB	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Lecturer has explained the component	7.4	19.8	72.7
Lecturer has explained how to use MIB	10.7	28.9	60.3
Lecturer has highlighted dateline	10.7	17.4	71.1
The students to refer beginning of the class	5.8	14.9	76.8
The students to refer end of the class	5.8	25.6	79.3
Lecturer has explained clearly assessments' instruction	17.3	21.5	57.1
Lecturer has followed thoroughly the activities	5.8	21.5	72.7
All tutorials are conducted as planned	3.3	20.7	75.2

In table 1, more than 60 per cent of the students agreed that the lecturer(s) have discussed all major components in MIB and how it can be utilized in the learning process. This result may be reflecting on the transitional culture in first year university system, whereby, the students are still adapting with the new learning flow and the lecturer(s) tends to simplify the explanation in align with the student's adaptation reason. In addition, there are many challenges in an integration of full understanding measurement of learning outcomes [Moore & Gayle, 2010], although it can be useful litmus test for pedagogical practices [Olson, 2009]. Almost 80 per cent of the students agreed lecturers have explained at the beginning of the class but only 60 per cent agreed that the lecturer(s) set reminder after the class. In addition, more than 73 per cent of the students agreed that the explanation of the class activities and assessments instruction is clear and followed religiously in all tutorials.

Table 2: The Utilisation of MIB in Learning Process

	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Information:			
Well informed with the LO	10.7	18.2	71.1
Well informed with all the topics	4.1	23.1	72.7
Well informed with the assessments	0	25.6	74.4
Well informed with all activities	0	28.1	71.9
Well informed with all deadlines	0.8	19.8	79.4
Understanding:			
Understand the Learning Objectives	3.3	31.4	65.3
Understand the Learning Outcomes	4.1	28.9	67
Application:			
Able to make an early preparation	2.5	3.3	69.4
Able to keep track on the topics in syllabus	3.3	4.1	72.7
Able to relate the LO	5.0	5.8	66.9
Able to identify the weakness/ strength of each topics	8.3	9.1	52.9
Improved the learning process	2.5	35.5	62

In table 2, although more than 65 per cent of the students are able to understand both learning objectives and outcomes, however, majority of the students are enlightened and have perspicuously understood with the list of the topics and are able to conform to available assessments and deadlines. In overall, more than 35 per cent of the students still did not utilise the MIB to the optimum and unable to appreciate the benefits in utilising the MIB. This might be due to the result that the students may be *new* to the university learning system and still adapting to the new learning environment. Finally, although the majority of 60 per cent agreed that the MIB helped them in their learning process, but up to 40 per cent of

students still being uncertain. This may indicate there may other tools which may help in learning process such as technology, environment, and space of the classroom [Ceppi & Zini 1998; Jamieson, 2003; Norton, 2009; Morgan, 2011].

$$Learning = \alpha + \beta_1 Info_1 + \beta_2 Understand_1 + \beta_3 Apply_1 + \varepsilon$$

Table 3: Regression Analysis Model

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t- Statistics	Prob.
Info	0.26541	0.11747	2.25930	0.026
Understanding	0.00101	0.10160	0.00996	0.992
Application	0.72679	0.09114	7.97421	0.000
R Squared	0.56247			
Adjusted R- Squared	0.55125			

The learning process may always take place is various variation and at any phase of time.

In table 3, students find that the given information provides comprehensive information for study preparation. The given information enables them to embattle and cope with syllabus. In addition the module information has significant influence on how the students' apply the contents into their preparation of study. Therefore it is quite evident from the analysis that the students focus most attention to the pre-requisite information of the module and how to apply contents of MIB into their study, although the understanding of the learning objectives and outcomes seem to have been ignored. The R-squared indicate 50 per cent of the variables facilitate the students' learning process.

The students' response indicates that the MIB is an effective tool to accumulate all pertinent and comprehensive information of the module contents. The detailed and factual information if acceptably and extensively understood enhances rigorous application of the MIB before and during the course of study. Hence, this can be achieved if the "contract" between the lecturer and students is effectuated amicably.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate positive finding on the importance of the MIB in learning process among undergraduate students in Taylor's University. Students seem to be familiarized with the hypothesized information and instructional guide. Hence, they are able to obtain extra important information such as topics in the syllabus, assignment components and its deadline. Although, the learning outcomes and objectives have been less focused by the students, this however does not seem to be an obstacle to cultivate learning process.

The MIB is designed to deliver inclusive information to students in order to ensure that the preparation can be made prior to the class. It is more sagacious if the lecturers could take extra initiative to teach the students to utilise the MIB. It is presumed that the students are able to distinguish and create a better understanding in every module that they embark upon and the learning outcomes and objectives of every module taught is clearly explained by the lecturer to avoid misconception. According to Mezirow's

Transformative Learning Theory, it is obvious that teaching/learning in a modern educational system needs to be improved, therefore, enhancement of the existing system should cater for the students' direct involvement in their personal development, which means consequently, utilizing the MIB can be a preliminary step to achieve this in the learning environment [Herlo, 2012].

By the same token, the lecturer may find it user oriented while imparting the knowledge because the students are familiar with the objectives, learning outcomes and direction of the modules that they teach. This will enable the students to understand the application of each module to their graduate capabilities and job market scope in future. Henceforth, a further research may be conducted in future to analyse the difference in learning process between a MIB user and the non-MIB user among private university in Malaysia.

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