International Conference on Learner Diversity 2010

A Comparative Study on Learner's Performance: A Collaboration between Open University Malaysia (OUM) and Kolej Tentera Darat Malaysia (KTD)

Omar, N. A.[a],*, Chiam, C. C.[a]

ªOpen University Malaysia, Jalan Tun Ismail Kuala Lumpur 50480, Malaysia

Abstract

The collaboration between Open University Malaysia (OUM) and Kolej Tentera Darat (KTD), an army college started since 2002. OUM held strongly on the believe of lifelong learning and this collaboration are able to provide education opportunities to those who missed their earlier chances in pursuing higher education. The purposes of this study are: 1) to do a descriptive study on the learner's performance and 2) to determine the impact of conducting different approach in teaching and learning system. The outcome of this study will be able to show the different approaches of teaching and learning in strategic collaborations.

© 2010 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Open and distance learning (ODL); Lifelong learning; Strategic collaboration; Teaching delivery; Assessment format

1. Introduction

It is the 21st century and higher education institutions in Malaysia is facing a fierce competition in the market. These intensified competition are pushing higher education institutions into the unfamiliar arena of service competition. Many believe that any collaboration between education providers and corporate industries can provide a financial foothold in an increasingly competitive educational marketplace. There are many untapped market in terms of providing education and many universities in Malaysia have collaborative partnerships as a means of maintaining viability. Collaboration can expand an institution's ability to offer a broader content base, course offerings can be aimed at the level and interests of students enrolled in that institution.

Collaborative efforts allow institutions to pool dwindling resources and use them to their best advantage (Konrad and Small, 1989). Open University Malaysia has formed alliances and collaboration with various organisations. This collaboration is in tandem with the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) in the second thrust: to raise the capacity for knowledge and innovation and nurture "first class mentality" under accelerating lifelong learning. There should be zero illiteracy in Malaysia according to 9th Malaysia Plan (2006-2010). In line with the zero illiteracy by year 2020, OUM provides education to those who wishes to equip themselves with knowledge.

*Corresponding author: Tel.: +603-55110693; fax: +603-55110697.
E-mail address: alin@oum.edu.my

 OUM realized the needs to provide to all those who missed their education in their early days and people who wishes to continue education but has certain restrains such as handicapped (OKU), prison sentences, certain entry requirements to fulfil according to Malaysian Accreditation Agency (MQA). However, in OUM, there will be no compromising in the quality of the assessment and delivery of courses provided to those learners.

OUM has been tapping on the needs of various layer of the society since its believe in lifelong learning. OUM provides a "second-chance" opportunities to those who missed their education in their early years. Faculty of Business and Management (FBM) in OUM collaborated with various organizations in that sense. FBM has collaboration with certain organisations with special-customised programme such as AEON (Jusco) and Army College (KTD) etc. There are other upcoming collaborations that FBM is foreseeing in the future.

2. Literature Review

Moore & Kearsley (1996), asserted that collaboration may become less of an option for institutions of higher education in the coming years as there is a breaking down of access on the potential student populations. This phenomenon was highlighted in a Computer Conferencing Conference in 1996 by Roger Boston coined the term "Cyber-Huns" to describe persons who invade a campus to persuade students to leave the institution in favour of telecommunicated courses offered by outside institutions or organisations.

Education has become big business, of great interest to big businesses. According to Trindade (1996) notes that the "cultural industries", which are now focused on leisure entertainment, already have the channels and equipment in place to provide education and training in the future.

Granger & Gulliver (1991), reported that distance educators are concerned with the increasing number of entrepreneurs who view the new delivery systems chiefly in terms of their profit potential. All of this means that as distance education programs and institutions attempt to deal with new teams of competitors on their own . In order to remain viable, educational institutions will have to work together cooperatively in partnerships and consortia for self-preservation.

There are changes in educational paradigms in higher education over the years due to the initiatives in international collaboration in distance education. Neil (1981) identified several potential benefits for adopting collaboration in distance education. There are as follows:

- The development of new, better and more extensive use of the learning resources;
- Community-based programs aimed at special and often dispersed populations; and
- The improvement of the quality of learning materials. Neil also notices the ability to respond to different kinds of political pressures and the need to initiate changes in social groups such as educational collaboration.

Croft et.al (l990), pointed out that sharing materials, facilities and approaches increases the range and quality of pedagogical and technological strategies available to the collaborators. Opening educational opportunities can reach a broader population of learners than traditionally served and the insurance of the relevance of educational programs to student needs are additional advantages of inter-institutional partnerships. It also summarised the benefits of collaboration collected from numerous studies conducted between l975 and l989. Among the benefits of collaboration are as follows:

- The capability to effectively resolve large problems which occur system-wide;
- The ability to use collective resources to meet challenges, and
- The absorption of risk across the partnership thus reducing the vulnerability of each member.

Collaborative initiatives also increase opportunities for institutions to obtain government funding for projects that provide broader benefits to all involved. Acting as a change agency, often a mission, but frequently not a reality in higher education institutions, can be more effective through collaborative efforts. According to Hendrick (1995), there are three primary factors encouraging educational collaboration.

- Institutions are faced with shrinking resources which are a consequence of public priority shifts away from funding education;
- The cost of investing in educational technologies and expanding their use in program production encourages the sharing of resource expenditure and maintenance among subscribers; and
- Increasing developmental "cost" in terms of time and expertise

Therefore, education providers are being asked to operate more efficiently and effectively, requests which can be enhanced through collaborative efforts among institutions.

3. Research Analysis

This section covers the performance analysis and it is conducted by selecting January 2010 semester of OUM-KTD learners' performance. A total sample of 65 learners, three courses have been chosen as the sample in this study and they are observed closely i) Introductory Management (BDPP1103) ii) Introductory Marketing (BDPM1103); and iii) Learning Skills for Open Distance Learners (OUMH1103).These courses are chosen because this is the first three courses that have to be taken in the first semester.

Table 1. A Summary of Teaching Delivery Used in OUM-KTD Programme

Dimensions	KTD Special Market Diploma in Management Programme
Duration to completion	Within 1 year or less to complete
Classes	Everyday class for 5-6 weeks per semester
Total credit	90 credits hours to graduation
Total courses	30 courses to complete upon graduation
Types of assessments	Assessment: Assignments, Midterm and final exam (vary according to subject) *All the assessment for the courses are the same as open market (usual duration).*
Learning pedagogy	Blended learning pedagogy

Table 1 above shows the way KTD special programme is conducted in summary. OUM-KTD adopted the blended learning pedagogy. It comprises of three components; self-managed learning, online learning and face-to-face learning. Upon completion of 90 credits or in lieu with 30 courses, learners will obtain Diploma in Management from OUM .OUM-KTD learners are assessed using the same assessments format for open market learners. There is no compromising of quality for learners in this collaboration as learners will be assessed through assignments, mid-term and final examinations on subject requirement in order to graduate.

4. Findings and recommendations

Table 2. Grading Marks and Result for Semester 1.

Grade/ Subject	Marks range	BDPM1103	BDPP1103	OUMH1103
A	4.00	16	0	0
A-	3.67	15	1	0
B+	3.33	13	0	1
B+	3.00	12	0	5
B-	2.67	6	3	16
C+	2.33	2	13	16
C+	2.00	1	28	10
C-	1.67	0	8	10

D+	1.33	0	9	7
D	1.00	0	3	0
Total		**65**	**65**	**65**

Table 2 above shows the grading marks for this programme and OUM-KTD learners' result for semester 1 with a total of 65 learners for the subject BDPM1103, BDPP1103 and OUMH1103 respectively. The performance for BDPM1103 is relatively better compared to the other courses, BDPP1103 and OUMH1103, as 24% and 23% of the learners achieved grade A and A- respectively. However, none of the learners achieve grade A and A- for both courses; BDPP1103 and OUMH1103. The result shows that the impact of conducting different format of assessments between subject BDPM1103 and BDPP1103/OUMH1103 in teaching and learning system does have impact on learners' performances in January Semester 2010.

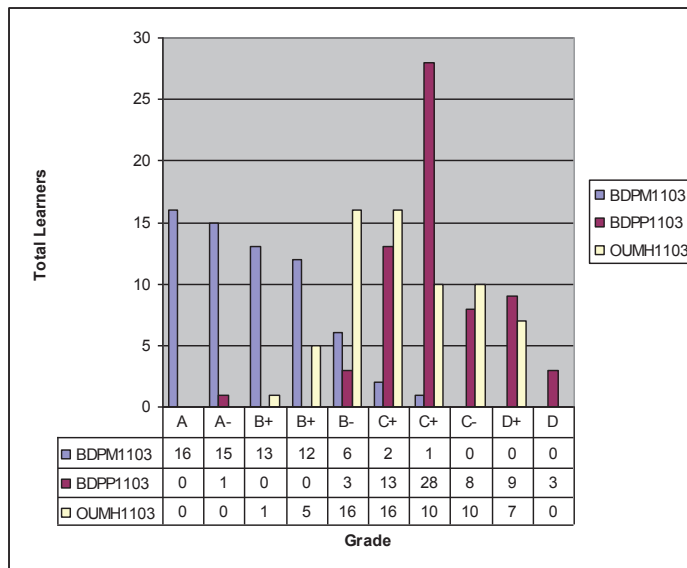|	A	A-	B+	B+	B-	C+	C+	C-	D+	D
BDPM1103	16	15	13	12	6	2	1	0	0	0
BDPP1103	0	1	0	0	3	13	28	8	9	3
OUMH1103	0	0	1	5	16	16	10	10	7	0

Figure 1. Spread of Grade for January 2010 Semester

Figure 1 above shows the spread of the grade for these three courses for January 2010 semester. The figure illustrates that learners performed better in BDPM1103 (Introductory Marketing) as most learners achieved grade A and A-. However, in BDPP1103 (Introductory Management) and OUMH1103 (Learning skills for open distance learners), learners achieved grade C+. Meanwhile most learners achieved grade B- and C+ for OUMH1103,. It can be seen that there are no A achievers for OUMH1103 and BDPP1103. The above figure also illustrates a huge number of learners who achieved C+ and D for BDPP1103. For BDPM1103, there is no learner achieved grade C and below. This may be due to the changes of assessments format for both of these courses in January 2010 semester.

There are several steps and measures we would like to recommend to incorporate a better teaching and learning for OUM-KTD collaboration:

- Besides being an OUM learner, KTD learners are also an on-going trainee in the military. They have hectic schedule because their schedule is fully packed with army marching, army training. Therefore, tutors who are appointed to conduct OUM-KTD programme should be of highly-appraised attitude. Eg. High and on-going motivation level. This is as accordance to Che Aziz & C.C.Chiam., (2007), indicated that one of the categories in appraising tutors indentified by students is "motivated and innovative".
- Tutors should understand the difficulties these learners are in balancing their time and tutors are highly encouraged to prepare and provide additional exercises/ worksheets with answers key for students. This will be able to assist and enhance students' grasp of the subjects.

- In order to get the attention of learners after a long-day field training, a highly interactive discussions should be conducted in the class as students will be able to voice out their opinions and views in certain concepts and issues regarding the subjects
- Lastly, a short revision should be allocated in each tutorial session approximately 30 minutes to recall their minds on the topics and areas covered earlier in the class.

This is a pilot study in analysing learners' performance for January 2010 semester. A further study in this same batch of learners will be conducted in order for OUM to capture a better teaching and learning for OUM-KTD programme.

5. References

Boston, R., (1996), "Best Practices in Computer Conferencing in Distance Education" conference, The Pennsylvania State University

Che Aziz & C.C. Chiam (2007), "Analysing the Students' Perceptions on the Effective Tutors using Fuzzy Set of Group Decision Making ", Proc of SEAAIR, 2007, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Croft, M., 1. Mugridge, L Daniel, & A. Hershfield, (eds.) (1990) "Distance Education: Development and Access", Caracas, Venezuela: ICDE, the Open Learning Agency and the Universidad Nacional Abierta.

Granger, Dan, Kate Gulliver, & Gary Miller. (1996). "Guiding principles for distance learning in a learning society"., Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Hendricks, S. S. (1995). ,"Effective partnerships: Key to the future of distance education", Research Monograph No. 11., Pennsylvania State University: American Center for Studies in Distance Education.

Konrad, A., & Small, J. (1989), "Collaboration in distance education". In R. Sweet (Ed.), Post-secondary distance education in Canada: Policies, practices and priorities (pp. 85-97). Athabasca, AB: Athabasca University.

Malaysia. (2006). Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006 – 2010, Government of Malaysia, Government Printers, KualaLumpur.

Moore, M. G., & Kearsley, G. (1996). ,"Distance education: A systems view"., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Neil, M.W. (1981), "Research study on international collaboration between institutions of distance learning"., Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

Trindade, A. R. (1996) , "International Cooperation in Open and Distance Learning" in Proc. of UNESCO EDIT'96 Conference, Moscow.