STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE BACHELOR IN FOODSERVICE MANAGEMENT COURSES

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the researcher focusing on area which are independent variables and dependent variable which classroom experience and student engagement by looking at the dimension of syllabus content, learning approach and classroom atmosphere. The objective of this study is to measure student engagement in the classroom based on classroom experience (syllabus content, teaching approach and atmosphere) and determine which domains that is most likely to contribute in student engagement in the classroom. Researcher found that a quantitative approach was the most suitable method of gathering data and information in order to obtain a significant meaningful data. The engagement of student in learning is influenced by teaching methodology, syllabus content and atmosphere of the classroom. These three factors influence the level of student engagement in the classroom but teaching approach is the most influential factor to the student engagement. Hopefully, the findings of this study can provide insightful information that can assist academicians, students and institutions to increase level of student’s engagement in classroom, hence, increasing level of performance and achievement of students.

Field of Research: Engagement, teaching, classroom, environment, syllabus content, foodservice student

1. Introduction

Student engagement in classroom is an area of great concern for educators, researchers, parents, and students themselves. Research has suggested that student engagement is crucial to student achievement and advancement (Marks, 2000). However, far too many students are bored, uninvolved, and disconnected from daily classroom topics and activities. Additionally, many students do not have a sense of belonging at university and do not see how current academic success has a strong influence on their future (Zyngier, 2007).

Therefore, an examination of student engagement in classroom is also important because foodservice industry reform movements advocate inquiry-oriented pedagogies as a way to increase student engagement, enhance student learning, and provide a basis of long term interest.

Many lecturers feel the pressure and have a desire to improve professionally so student learning and test score can increase. Yet many do not know exactly how to effect changes that lead to such improvement.

Students need to be engaged before they can apply higher order, creative thinking skills. They learn most effectively when the teacher makes sense and meaning of the curriculum material being taught. This can only happen if the teacher has created a safe learning environment that encourages students to meet challenges and apply high rigor skills to real-world, unpredictable situations inside and outside of school.
A good classroom environment is crucial for both the teachers and students. To ensure quality education, they need to focus on students' backgrounds, behavioral attitudes and existing knowledge. At the same time students need to know their teachers' expectations of them. And in this way their mutual understanding fosters their best learning outcomes.

Pascarella and Terenzini’s (1991) summary of twenty years of research on the impact college has on student development further supports the importance of student engagement. Perhaps the strongest conclusion that can be made is the least surprising. Simply put, the greater the student’s involvement or engagement in academic work or in the academic experience of college, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development.

2. Problem Statements

Critics have long been concerned about the lack of student engagement in schools, let alone school improvement. Faculty, in addition to their subject expertise, need to be trained in identifying learning styles, developing modular curriculum, and mastering instructional technology and methodology in order to become effective assessors of a student’s abilities and potential, as well as designers of learning environments and systems. In turn, colleges and universities need to revisit how they design, update, renovate, and equip current classrooms to make the most of teacher-student interaction.

Information about student engagement can be a useful tool for managers, as suggested by Coates (2005) by monitoring student engagement and outcomes, institutions can identify areas of good practice as well as those areas in need of improvement. Institutions can also allocate expensive teaching and support resources in a strategic fashion, and report the results of such actions in ways that demonstrate the efficacy of the feedback (Kuh, 2009). The argument was that credible, actionable information about how students spent their time and what institutions emphasized in terms of student performance could tell an accurate comprehensive story of students’ educational experiences and be a powerful lever for institutional improvement.

Syllabus contents may influence student’s engagement in the classroom. In different lens stated teaching approach influence students in perform well in the classroom. Atmosphere without doubt contributes to the performance of students based on their engagement in the classroom. Three domains that were above mentioned may also contribute to the hospitality management competency based on plethora of past literature expounded that every domain contributes to student competency. Still, what is the most significant domain that will contribute to the Hospitality Management student engagement is yet to be known.

Coates (2005) has noted that data on student engagement has the advantage of providing information on what students are actually doing. While this may appear self-evident, it has a broader significance for the management of institutions, students and academic programmes. Krause (2005) illustrates that engagement has become a pivotal focus of attention as institutions locate themselves in an increasingly competitive higher education environment.

In order to develop an effective program, the view of stakeholder needs to be taken into consideration which one of them is student. Therefore their opinion is valuable in developing an effective program. By looking on the perspective of students based on their level of engagement in classroom, an effective program can be developed based on the domains of classroom experience. Therefore, this study is conducted to identify student engagement on the foodservice management program because lack of the student engagement in classroom would deny student opportunities to performance better.
3. Research Objectives, Hypotheses, and Significance of The Study

Based on the problem highlighted, study objectives were developed:

3.1 To measure student engagement in the classroom based on classroom experience (syllabus content, teaching approach and atmosphere).

3.2 To determine which domains (syllabus content, teaching approach and atmosphere) that is most likely to contribute student engagement in the classroom.

Hypotheses

Based on the study framework, three hypotheses were developed:

H1: There is relationship between syllabus content and student engagement in classroom on the foodservice management courses.

H2: There is a relationship between teaching approach and student engagement in classroom on the foodservice management courses.

H3: There is a relationship between classroom atmosphere and student engagement in classroom on the foodservice management courses.

Significance of the Study

Measuring and identifying the level of three domains could help to move academician in hospitality field to develop a suitable approach of learning process in order to produce student who are competent in responding to the needs of the industry. Besides that, players in the hospitality industry will benefit this research by understanding and play their role in engaging students with working experience while they are in college. For student, the result of this study will benefit future students in a long term whereby a curriculum that blending classroom, campus and off campus could be develop in catering their needs during undergo college experience. What is more, it can motivate students to get involved in the domains which more contribute to their hospitality management competency.

4. Literature Review

Student Engagement

Definitions and classifications of student engagement across the research literature are abundant yet extremely inconsistent. However, while there is no singularly accepted definition of engagement, there is ideological consensus that engagement is a multidimensional construct. There are three factor model of Fredricks et al. (2004) currently seems to be the most widely used and accepted classification scheme for student engagement. Specifically, this model encompasses the three factors of behavior, emotion, and cognition.
Classroom Experience

Student perceptions of the classroom environment influence their beliefs about themselves (efficacy) and these beliefs then influence the nature and extent of engagement in academic tasks. The association between student perceptions of the classroom and engagement is presumed through social cognitive theory (Patrick, 2007). Classroom factors or classroom social environment has been noted to play a role in student engagement, motivation and school success (Patrick, 2007). Class factors include affiliation, fairness, cohesion, mutual respect and support from teachers and peers.

Syllabus Content

There is an argument when industry criticized educators for over emphasizing theoretical concepts and identified deficiencies in certain practical skills. For academician part, they felt that the industry did not make the best use of students, both during their practical training and on graduation (Barron, 2010). Therefore, they need to review the program offered by the institution to ensure that the syllabus can equip students with all the skill and knowledge needed.

Classroom Environment

The educational environment can be described as the learning space in which conditions are created which make teaching and learning possible (Temple, 2007). The primary goal of an educational environment is offering space for knowledge transfer. Classrooms as physical spaces designed to support face-to-face teaching and learning, with tables and chairs and a means of displaying information for all to see, can still be regarded as the core learning space (Brown & Lippincott, 2003; Temple, 2008).

5. Theoretical Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom experience</td>
<td>Student Engagement in the Classroom on the Bachelor in Foodservice Management Courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Syllabus content
- Teaching approach
- Atmosphere

H1

H2

H3
6. Methodology

Sample and data collection method

A questionnaire was used to obtain respondents’ opinion about their level of engagement in classroom. The census sampling was applied in this study. Census is entire population is taken into account and as such it is most accurate. For this survey, students with similar major within fields of hospitality management program were included in the study. Students other than the foodservice management program field were excluded from this survey.

Every final year students of bachelor in foodservice from Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam were the target sample for this study. Final year students in this study referred to semester 5 and semester 6 students and researcher choose these target groups because they were already taken and undergone most of the foodservice courses offered in the program structure. Students were selected from varied classes, gender and previous education background.

7. Finding & Discussion

Findings were based on the survey questionnaires distributed among Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam Students’ from Semester Five and Semester Six. Information gathered were used to answer all research objective, research questions and hypotheses testing which include factors that might influence level of student engagement in classroom. The analyses procedures were carried out using SPSS Windows version 17.0, where the respondents’ profile was firstly highlighted. The series of statistical methods that were applied in this study include (a) descriptive statistics, (b) Pearson correlation, and (c) regression analysis. The survey administered was able to capture 114 respondents and 104 questionnaires were found usable and analyzed by using the frequency of respondents as complementary for this research. The results of the data collection and the statistical methods applied are presented, analyzed and interpreted as follows.

Several analyses were taken to answer the research objectives of this study by looking at the mean scores rated by the respondents. The purpose of this descriptive analysis is to examine if all continuous variables in this study were normally distributed. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used to summarize continuous, interval and Likert scale data related to syllabus content, teaching approach, classroom atmosphere and student engagement, while frequency and percentages were conducted to describe nominal data such as gender, previous qualification and education (Stuart and Ord, 1994). Descriptive analysis was able to provide researcher with an overview of the respondents perception of the variables involved in this study through mean and standard deviation information.

Demographic Data

Overall, 104 (86%) out of 121 administered questionnaires were found usable and analyzed by using the frequency as complementary for this study. The table below depicted a very large part of the respondents (78%) were female with another small number of respondents (22%) were male.
### Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the educational background, the results survey in table below shows that majority of students 82% (85 students) was the Diploma qualification, followed by 14% (15 respondents) from STPM, while the Matriculation qualification was 4% (4 respondents).

### Previous Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STPM</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the respondents at the end of the final semester, the highest percentage went for CGPA 3.49-3.00 (64%), while the remaining of the respondents (21%) CGPA 4.00-3.50 and CGPA 2.99-2.50 was (14%) and only one respondent (1%) for CGPA 2.49-2.00 presented as below:

### Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CGPA</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.00-3.50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.49-3.00</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.99-2.50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.49-2.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Analysis

This study used 5-point Likert scales to measure ratings of all variables. The analyses consist of five sections which include Section A (syllabus content), Section B (teaching approach) and Section C (classroom atmosphere) as independents variables. Then, it is followed by Section D (student engagement) as a dependent variable. With that, the following section provides detail descriptions of a descriptive analysis for Section A.

The main purpose of descriptive analysis was to examine if all continuous variables in the study model were normally distributed. Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were used to summarize Likert scale data which related to the respondents answers in this analysis. The mean scores were used in order to verify the level of frequency and the degree of frequency or agreement of the variables. A mean score of 2.99 or below was termed as ‘rarely’, mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 4.99 was classified as ‘very often’ and mean scores of 5.00 and above were termed as ‘always’. With that, the following section provides detail descriptions of a descriptive analysis for Section B, C, D, and E.

Course Content

This section analyzes the course content toward student engagement. In this section, eleven items were included for measuring the course content. Respondents were asked to choose only one point based on the 5-point to describe level of frequency scale ranging from 1(never) to 5 (always).

Result shows that the range of the mean score was range 3.56 to 3.83 which considered as very often. Respondents agree that the content of the course contributed to their understanding of the subject (M=3.83, SD=0.645) because they worked on the paper or project that required integrating idea from various sources (M=3.82, SD= 0.650). Respondents also feel that the content of the course was challenging (M=3.82, SD= 0.747). Beside that, respondents agreed that engagement in the classroom because objectives were clearly expressed (M=3.80; SD= 0.597), the examination covered the material /skills emphasized in the course (M=3.76, SD=0.631), its supplemental course materials (M=3.73, SD= 0.700), the workload on this course is acceptable (M= 3.71, SD= 0.720), as well as the textbook contributed to students understanding of the subject (M= 3.71, SD= 0.692). Furthermore, lecture and tutorial material was well presented (M= 3.69, SD=0.669) and applying theories or concepts from this class to practical problem (M=3.60, SD= 0.661). Lastly, respondent do not think fourteen weeks deadline was achieved adequate complete the courses (M=3.56, SD=0.798).

Teaching Approach

The responses of the questions in this section are based on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(never) to 5 (always) and the respondents were asked to choose only one point. In this section, eleven items were included in measuring the teaching approach and Table 4.5 shows the mean score for teaching approach ranging 3.20 to 4.23. From the result, majority of the respondents agree that lecturer encourage sharing idea with one another in class (M= 3.96, SD= 0.682), lecturer as approachable to discuss class –related issues (M=3.88, SD=0.628) and strongly committed to students success (M= 3.85, SD= 0.707). Moreover, respondents also agree that lecturer always challenges them to do best work to meet lecturer’s standard (M= 3.80, SD= 0.716), feedback from the lecturer on the test and class assignment was useful (M= 3.80, SD= 0.688) and student also feel that lecturer treated student in a respectful manner in the classroom (M= 3.78, SD= 0.623). A part from that, respondent said that lecturer answer questions about course assignment in a timely manner (M= 3.78, SD= 0.607), inspired students to learn more about course content (M= 3.77, SD= 0.657) and creates welcoming classroom environment (M= 3.74, SD= 0.697). Respondents feel that lecturer can be contacted when needed and received helpful replies (M= 3.67, SD=0.645) and fair in dealing with student in the classroom (M=3.63, SD=0.711).
Classroom Atmosphere

Seven items for measuring classroom atmosphere were included to be responded based on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The highest mean score which increase level of involvement in classroom was lighting control (M= 3.90, SD= 0.631), followed by temperature (M=3.86, SD=0.703). Students agree that classmates give cooperation to work on group assignment (M= 3.81, SD= 0.764), classroom facilities are functioning well (M= 3.77, SD= 0.642) and cleanliness increase level of involvement in classroom (M= 3.76, SD= 0.704). Students rated that the number of student in the class more than capacity of the classroom (M= 3.09, SD= 1.142).

Student Engagement

In this section, eight items were included for measuring student engagement. The responses for seven questions in this section are based on the 5-point Likert scale level of agreement ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Whereas, another remaining two questions in this section required respondents to choose only one point either Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor.

Most of the respondent agree that they have a good relationship with classmate (M= 4.06, SD= 0.651), remained engaged in classroom by relating the material to their experiences (M= 3.85, SD= 0.604) and stay engaged in classroom by actively listening to what was discussed (M= 3.82, SD= 0.693). From the survey, it was found that student enjoy participating orally in classroom (M=3.2, SD= 0.685) and volunteer to answer questions in classroom when they knew the answers (M= 3.40, SD=0.704). In term of student performance in examination, student agreed their CGPA increased because of participation in the classroom (M= 3.34, SD=0.808).

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation Matrix was used to assess the relationship between the independent variables (syllabus content, teaching approach, and classroom atmosphere) and dependent variable (student engagement). Pallant (2005) stated that the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables can be described via Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis.

Subsequently, after the relationship was determined, the strength of association must then be decided. In order to quantitatively describe the strength of the association between two or more variables, the size of the correlation coefficient is utilized. For the purpose of categorizing the strength of the association between variable, rules of thumb based on the absolute size of the correlation coefficient had been proposed.

In determining the strength of the relationship and the interpretation of Pearson correlation coefficients, Pallant (2011) suggested the following guidelines: The value of correlation coefficients (r) of r=.10 to .29 was considered as small; r=.30 to .49 was interpreted as medium, whereas r=.50 to 1.0 was termed as large respectively. In addition, Hair et al. (2006) advocated that very high correlations exceeding .90 indicate the existence of multicollinearity.

The relationship between student engagement and all the independent variables, namely syllabus content, teaching approach and classroom atmosphere were examined using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The results of Pearson correlation between independent variables and dependent variable are presented as follows:

a) There was a significant relationship between course content and student engagement (r=.296, p<.05). Therefore, it can be said that these two variables had a positive relationship. However, the strength was small in association.
b) The relationship between teaching approach and student engagement (r=.387, p<.05) was considered significant. There was a medium strength of association between two variables.

c) The relationship between classroom atmosphere and student engagement (r=.271, p<.05). Therefore, it can be said that these two variables had a positive relationship. However, the strength was small in association.

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

**Relationship and Influence of Course Content, Teaching Approach and Classroom Atmosphere on Student Engagement**

Multiple regression is used to address how well a set of variables is able to predict a particular outcome and which variable in a set of variables is the best predictor of an outcome (Pallant, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the independent variables comprise of course content, teaching approach, classroom atmosphere, while the dependent variable was student engagement. The independent variables were entered into the multiple regression equation at once.

Furthermore, tolerance is an indicator of how much of the variability of the specified independent is not explained by the other independent variable. In contrast, the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) values above 10 indicating multicollinearity (Pallant, 2011). Thus, this study utilized the cut-off points in determining the presence of multicollinearity (tolerance value of less than .10 or VIF value above of 10) as suggested by Pallant (2011). Based on the collinearity statistics, the tolerance was more than .10 and the VIF values were below 10. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the regression coefficient were not affected by multicollinearity. In other words, the VIF values were below 10, indicating that there was no problem of multicollinearity. As a result, the assumptions of multiple regression analyses were deemed met.

Based on the beta value under standardized coefficients was evaluated in comparing the contribution of each of the independent variables to the dependent variable. The highest standardized beta coefficient was teaching approach (β=.285, p<.05). It was determined as the largest influence and makes the strongest contribution to explain on student engagement. Followed by the beta value for classroom atmosphere (β=.109, p>.05) that was determined as the second largest influence on student engagement. Meanwhile, for course content the standard beta coefficient (β=.093, p>.05) was the lowest which showed that it made less contribution on student engagement. Therefore, in this study, it was found that the most significant predictor of student engagement is teaching approach. However, the regression results indicate positive but less significant relationship between course content and student engagement as well as between classroom atmosphere and student engagement. Thus, result highlights the fact that though course content and classroom atmosphere has a positive relationship with student engagement but it is not an important determinant of student engagement.

**Reliability analysis**

In responding to objective number one of this study, the content of the course contributed to students understanding of the subject because they worked on the paper or project that required integrating idea from various sources. The content of the course was challenging to the student yet because objectives were clearly expressed, the examination covered the material /skills emphasized in the course, its supplemental course materials, the workload on this course is acceptable, as well
as the textbook contributed to students their engagement in classroom. Furthermore, lecture and tutorial material was well presented and applying theories or concepts from this class to practical problem. However, time duration of fourteen are less sufficient and lead to lack of engagement in class. Lecturer’s encouragement in sharing idea with one another in class makes the class more exciting for students’ engagement. Because the lecturer are approachable to discuss class –related issues and strongly committed and challenges them to do best work to meet lecturer’s standard make the engagement higher. Immediate feedback from the lecturer on the test and class assignment was useful and fair treatment given to student in a respectful manner in the classroom makes students feel appreciated thus inspired students to learn more about course content and creates welcoming classroom environment. Looking at the atmosphere, of lighting control classroom increase the level of students’ engagement, followed by temperature, cleanliness and facility functionality. Social circle in class especially classmates in giving cooperation to work on group assignment increase the level of involvement in classroom.

Research Objective 1: To measure student engagement in the classroom based on classroom experience (syllabus content, teaching approach and atmosphere) which also refer to hypotheses, the results are as below:

Hypotheses Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is relationship between syllabus content and student engagement in class on the foodservice management courses.</td>
<td>There was a significant relationship between course content and student engagement ($r= .287$, $p&lt;0.05$). Therefore, it can be said that syllabus content positively correlated with student engagement. However, the strength was small in association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is a relationship between teaching approach and student engagement in classroom on the foodservice management courses.</td>
<td>The relationship between teaching approach and student engagement ($r= .387$, $p&lt;.05$) was considered significant. There was a medium strength of association between two variables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is a relationship between classroom atmosphere and student engagement in classroom on the foodservice management courses.</td>
<td>The relationship between classroom atmosphere and student engagement ($r= .271$, $p&lt;.05$). Therefore, it can be said that these two variables had a positive relationship. However, the strength was small in association.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Objective 2: To determine which domains (syllabus content, teaching approach and atmosphere) that is most likely to contribute student engagement in the classroom.
The highest standardized beta coefficient was teaching approach ($\beta=.285$, $p<.05$). It was determined as the largest influence and makes the strongest contribution to explain on student engagement. Followed by the beta value for classroom atmosphere ($\beta=.109$, $p>.05$) that was determined as the second largest influence on student engagement. Meanwhile, for course content the standard beta coefficient ($\beta=.093$, $p>.05$) was the lowest which showed that it made less contribution on student engagement. Therefore, in this study, it was found that the most significant predictor of student engagement is teaching approach. However, the regression results indicate positive but less significant relationship between course content and student engagement as well as between classroom atmosphere and student engagement.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the engagement of student in learning is influenced by teaching methodology, syllabus content and atmosphere of the classroom. These three factors influence the level of student engagement in the classroom but teaching approach is the most influence factor to the student engagement. However, we are not denying the fact that syllabus content and classroom atmosphere also influence level of student engagement. This is because the lecturers have direct communication with the students and total experience of learning process of the students mostly depends on the condition created by the lecturers when conducting the class.

Hopefully, the findings of this study can provide insightful information that can assist academician, students and institutions to increase level of students’ engagement in classroom, hence, increasing level of performance and achievement of students.

8. Future Recommendation

It is highly recommended that future research need to be executed looking at the category of the courses which are practical or theory oriented. This is because different nature of courses (practical/theory) might need different approach (lecture/hands on). Therefore, suggestion to separate all the foodservice courses according to their category which are theory or practical courses in order to increase student engagement in classroom are highly recommended.
References


