



A Framework for Assessing Students Participation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University

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Abstract. Learning in 21st century focuses on student participation. This is in line with the international standards of education (such as the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance, and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) that are based on the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). The achievement of learning outcomes of a study program (also referred to as Program Learning Outcomes: PLOs) requires student involvement in teaching and learning process. Thus, the term “student participation” should be clearly defined and implemented into teaching and learning process. While student participation encompasses various means, university (or faculty) may need to formulate a certain framework of student participation that is applicable to its context. This paper aims to develop a framework for assessing student participation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani Campus, Thailand. Based on literature, the forms of student participation were identified. The elements of student participation presented in this paper could be applied to future research for measuring the levels of student participation.

Keywords: Active Learning · Learning Outcome · Lifelong Learning · Student Participation

1 Introduction

Student participation has been used as a significant criterion of higher education assessment [1]. The past studies stated that student participation (e.g. student engagement with learning activity) predicts learning outcomes [2, 3]. A study by Sariefe and Klose found that 80.2% of students agreed that in-class participation allows them to achieve learning [4]. Student participation is “participation that entails a fair chance to influence the students’ study situation and experience involvement” [5]. For example, students are involved in a decision making on the teaching and learning process [5]. Student participation can be either on-site or online [4].

Encouraging student participation in learning activities enables them to acquire greater competency (e.g. knowledge, skills, and abilities) and achieve higher grade [6]. The goal of student participation is accomplished when students are well aware of the classroom discipline [7]. The assessment of student participation is usually based on

general criteria and instructor's interpretation [4]. Some students who demonstrate vocal participation are considered as very good in class, while those who do not participate are judged as poor performance [4].

To increase student participation, it is necessary to define the certain constructs of student participation to allow effective participation and reliable monitoring of participation of each student [4]. This paper views a framework of student participation as useful for conducting consistent and accurate assessment of participation. While the forms of student participation can be varied [5], universities probably focus on the particular forms of student participation in accordance with their policies on education.

2 Background to the Problem

Whereas student participation leads to better achievement of learning outcomes [2, 3], many studies found that student participation in the learning process were ineffective [8]. Many students have less participated in teaching and learning activities due to several factors such as their willingness to participate, physical environment, and virtual environment [9].

However, students can participate in different ways [3]. Since there are various forms of student participation [8], university or faculty may identify the forms of student participation in line with its contexts (e.g. university's educational philosophy or the policy on education). The purpose of this paper is to formulate a framework for assessing student participation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSO), Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani Campus, Thailand.

3 Theoretical Review

The term "student participation" is closely related to the behavioral component of student engagement that refers to "school-related conduct, attendance, contribution in learning and participation in academic activities" [10]. To foster student participation at university level, a low pressure and a safe learning environment are required [11]. Therefore, university should provide students with supportive conditions such as experiential learning opportunities and student-lecturer interactions [12]. Learning is the process of developing knowledge, skills, and abilities [13]. Because of the fact that students who actively participated in learning experience are more likely to increase their academic performance, experiential learning theory is applicable to this study [7].

Experiential learning theory is commonly cited by previous studies [13]. Experiential learning emphasizes the involvement of students in active learning experiences [14]. Kolb's experiential learning theory focuses on four stages of learning: concrete experience (learning-by-feeling), reflective observation (learning-by-watching), abstract conceptualization (learning-by-thinking), and active experimentation (learning-by-doing) [14] (Fig. 1).

While experiential learning theory provides a holistic model of learning process, student participation is an important part of experiential learning activities [15]. Different stages of experiential learning require different levels of student participation [14]. It can be said that it is impossible to learn more complex tasks without supportive learning process [16].

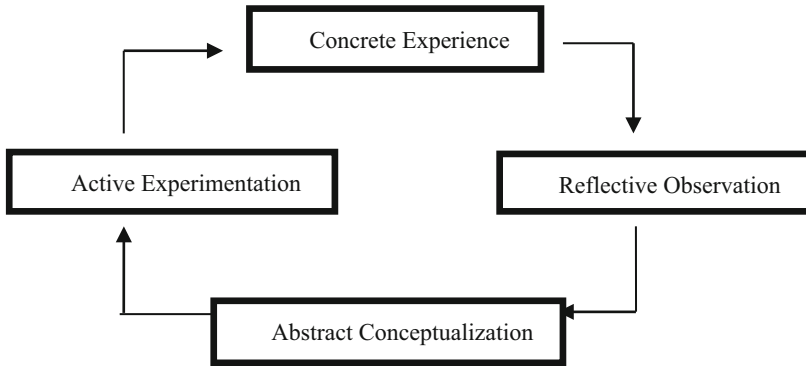


Fig. 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory [14]

4 Methodology

4.1 Scope of the Study

Student participation is defined as students' active behavior in the classroom, students' impact on curriculum design, and students' feeling of belonging to a community [17]. This paper focuses on developing a framework for assessing student participation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSO), Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani Campus, Thailand. The constructs of student participation were based on the previous studies. Then, the constructs that were linked to PSU's educational philosophy and HUSO's vision/mission were selected. The statements of PSU's educational philosophy and HUSO's vision/mission (as of May 2022) are as follows:

PSU's educational philosophy: "PSU's educational philosophy is based on Progressivism, with the aim to develop student in all aspects and prepare them to thrive in their respective societies. This includes assisting them in adapting to unpredictable circumstances by using learning process methods and treating students as the center of attention.....and the various learning processes listed as follows. Active learning means learning from a variety of activities and actions. Problem-based learning describes learning based on problem-solving..... Project-based learning refers to learning based on projects..... Service learning means learning by serving the community" [18].

HUSO's vision (year 2019–2023): "A leading educational institution in Humanities and Social Sciences contributing to sustainable social development and bridging the community to internationalization" [19].

HUSO's mission (year 2019–2023) (selected only a mission which is relevant to teaching and learning process): "To produce graduates who have morality, and to produce graduates with academic and professional competences who are able to integrate local wisdom and global competencies for achieving a competitive advantage at national and ASEAN levels" [19].

According to ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance [20], university's educational philosophy should be reflected in the teaching and learning activities. Likewise, all study programs under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences are supposed to integrate PSU's educational philosophy into the teaching and learning process.

4.2 Data Analysis

This paper adopted a scoping review. The key words used for selecting the relevant articles were “student participation” and “student engagement”. Based on literature review, this paper identified the constructs of student participation that were consistent with PSU’s educational philosophy and HUSO’s vision/mission. Each construct of student participation was derived from the statements posed by previous studies.

5 Result

This section presents the constructs of student participation corresponding to PSU’s educational philosophy and HUSO’s vision/mission. HUSO’s vision covers not only teaching and learning but also other functions. While HUSO’s vision provides a broader guideline than the mission, all constructs of student participation indicated in Table 1 are consistent with HUSO’s vision. Then, the interrelations between each construct and PSU’s educational philosophy and HUSO’s mission are addressed in Table 1.

According to Table 1, all constructs of student participation are consistent with PSU’s educational philosophy which emphasizes “Progressivism philosophy of education” [19]. Progressivism places a value on student-centered learning rather than a subject-centered curriculum [21]. All constructs are also linked to HUSO’s mission in terms of producing “graduates with academic and professional competences” [19]. The constructs of student participation are then discussed.

5.1 Defining Class Rules on Participation

Müller-Kuhn, Herzig, Häbig and Zala-Mezö [22] asserted that lecturers and students have different views on student participation which are influenced by generational order. In fact, students can help to define the rules of participation (e.g. listening to others and answering the questions) [23]. Students who are involved in self-regulated learning are more likely to achieve learning outcomes [24]. Self-regulated learning is a process whereby students actively set the goals, implement strategies, and evaluate the achievement [24].

5.2 Student Involvement in Discussion

The construct of “student involvement in discussion” is extremely important to the courses of social sciences. Rocca [1] argued that students are more likely to talk for a longer period of time in the context of arts and social sciences than natural sciences. This seems like the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences should provide students with discussion session on the relevant topics. Learning by discussion is a two-way communication [25]. It allows students to express their ideas verbally so that their competences will be improved [25]. This method could serve HUSO’s mission that relies on academic and professional competences of graduates [19].

5.3 Students’ Impact on Curriculum Design or Course Design

Facilitating students’ active involvement in curriculum design and course design enables students to become co-creators of learning [26]. Tsaroucha and Randall [26] maintain that student participation in curriculum design not only improves curriculum but also enhances students’ feelings of ownership in the elements of curriculum. They will be more motivated to engage in teaching and learning activities, which in turn could lead to good learning outcomes.

Table 1. Linking the constructs of student participation to PSU’s educational philosophy and HUSO’s mission

Constructs	Statements	PSU’s educational philosophy	HUSO’s mission
Defining class rules on participation	Students helped to define class rules on participation [1].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students were actively engaged in time management and study planning [27].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students were involved in self-regulated learning [24].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
Student involvement in discussion	Students discussed assignments with lecturers [12].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students discussed what the lesson would cover [1].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students prepared arguments in advance for discussion in the class [1].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students frequently asked questions [1].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Constructs	Statements	PSU's educational philosophy	HUSO's mission
Students' impact on curriculum design or course design	Students played an active role in co-creating curriculum with lecturers [17].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students played an active role in co-creating course with lecturers [17].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
Student involvement in the course evaluation or learning assessment	Students voluntarily participated in the course evaluations [28].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students actively communicated their support needs [27].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
Students' belonging to the interactive group or community	Students actively participated in the interactive community of learners [29, 30]	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)
	Students actively participated in a small group discussion [31].	✓ (Progressivism/ treating students as the center of attention)	✓ (to produce graduates with academic and professional competences)

5.4 Student Involvement in the Course Evaluation or Learning Assessment

Student involvement in the establishment of assessment requirements is the active role of students in class [32]. It reflects students' ability to make judgments [33]. Evaluative judgment refers to "the ability to make decisions about the quality of work of self and others" [33]. Student competence can be developed through the involvement in learning assessment [33]. Thus, student involvement in learning assessment could support HUSO's mission that aims at producing graduates with academic and professional competences.

5.5 Students' Belonging to the Interactive Group or Community

Macnaught and Yates [29] and Nieuwoudt [30] agreed that students' belonging to a specific interactive community is the form of student participation. Student engagement in interactive group learning activities will increase their learning [34]. Interactive student-centered sessions can be used to promote deep learning of students [35]. In opposition to joining the passive group, participating in the interactive group provides students with a chance of defending or debating which enhances learning outcomes [36].

6 Discussion

Based on literature, student participation has a positive impact on learning outcomes [24]. Effective student participation can occur when lecturers set the clear expectations and guidelines for participation [6]. This could reduce students' frustration of active participation. Thus, lecturers should communicate the expectations and guidelines for active participation to all students [6]. Students who understand the expectations of student participation are more motivated to engage in teaching and learning activities [17]. In line with the definition of student participation defined by Bergmark and Westman [17] as mentioned earlier, this paper identified the constructs of student participation. Additionally, this paper confirmed that the constructs of student participation were linked to PSU's educational philosophy, and HUSO's vision and mission. This could serve as the means to achieve students' learning outcomes, educational philosophy, and the faculty's vision and mission.

Participation is a central role of learning skills [30]. This is consistent with experiential learning theory which focuses on student participation in learning process [14]. Furthermore, student participation sustains the use of active learning approach. Active learning refers to "an instructional method to engage students in meaningful learning by doing rather than observing" [37].

However, the effectiveness of student participation can differ among different groups of students or students in different countries. In comparison between different cultural groups, Senior, Bartholomew, Soor, Shepperd, Bartholomew and Senior [38] argued that the numbers of East Asian participants were too low, compared to those Western participants. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, PSU (Pattani Campus) located in Thailand, Southeast Asia, may face similar situation with those universities in East Asia because they have similar cultures. Henceforth, future study should measure the level of student participation in the particular region. If the level of student participation is low, universities should implement the solution to this problem.

7 Conclusion

Student participation is traditionally viewed as benefiting students in terms of grades and completion of degree, but it actually benefits long-term success of students (beyond grades and completion of degree) [17]. Students' active participation is the means to develop their lifelong learning [39]. There is a strong relationship between student participation and self-efficacy, which in turn leads to higher levels of career readiness and employability [23].

However, students and lecturers may have different perceptions of what active participation means [29]. A framework of student participation is helpful for gaining a better understanding of student participation defined by the university or faculty. This paper provides the appropriate forms of student participation that are linked to PSU's educational philosophy and HUSO's vision/mission. The constructs of student participation can be applied to other universities (or other faculties) but they may emphasize different elements of student participation.

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