Academic Performance through “Ready for Success (R4S)” Module at Faculty of Electrical Engineering, UiTM

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ready for Success (R4S) is a complete module that was designed to help university students with low grade point average (GPA) to improve their academic record. The uniqueness of this program is through the approach of collaboration between three (3) parties that having different areas of expertise, namely Academician, Islamic Religious Officer and Counselor. The collaboration has resulted in a unique synergy in developing students’ potential. The method used is through lectures, few other activities including individual and group counseling sessions for motivation and study techniques. It is also involving a continuous learning and level of spiritual well-being of the students. R4S has been implemented successfully in Faculty of Electrical Engineering at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and has been proven to increase student academic achievement in four (4) sequences of semester to at least four group of students that having GPA below 2.5. The results show that the minimal improvement recorded was 78% and the maximum was 96%. The research, recorded and average of 84% improvement from 22 participants. This unique synergy of the collaboration between different areas of expertise has successfully assisted students to disclose their true potential in improving their academic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

MARA College was officially renamed Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM) on 14 October 1967. Its establishment came as a response to a crucial need in the country for trained manpower at professional, especially among bumiputeras. This shortage was identified through a manpower survey conducted by the government in 1965 collaboration with the United Nations. ITM’s rapid development during those years had come about with the expansion of its educational programmes, which were in line with the requirements of an increasingly demanding job market. Many courses were internationally affiliated and the institute offered advanced diploma courses, which were the equivalent to general degrees. For functional purposes, ITM was granted all the powers of a university. But its historical name was retained until August 26, 1999 where it was granted University status and named Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) [1].

The University is committed to helping bumiputera students achieve the highest scholarly level and to prepare them for careers in public and professional practice in various fields. Its formation is based on a vision of outstanding scholarship and academic excellence that is capable of providing leadership in various arenas. Although still a fledgling compared to other more established universities in the country, UiTM has earned a reputation as being one of Malaysia’s innovative and entrepreneurial universities, as it has formed linkages with numerous and diverse industrial sectors. Hence, its relationships with the industries have enriched its research and innovation [1].

Today, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering (FKE) draws strength from these initiatives, exploring and mastering various frontiers of knowledge as it works towards reaching greater heights. In the faculty effort to continuously improve to new boundaries, focuses are given to its students’ academic success. The faculty strives hard to ensure lifelong learning is embedded within FKE education blueprint. One of the methods to enhance academic performance among students is the introduction of Ready for Success (R4S) module.
Literature Review:

It is within the FKE Vision to produce electrical engineers who are competitive, global and ethical. The blueprint of FKE is based on three (3) elements [2]:
a. Thinking Creatively and Critically,
b. Effective Communication,
c. Producing Global Talent.

The Ready for Success (R4S) program was initiated to compliment the three (3) elements set by the FKE. However, the programs' objectives are highlighted into two main (2) parts:
a. Mastery in knowledge
b. Owning ethics and morality

The objectives were formed based on the practices and moral values of prophet Muhammad SAW, Companions, Scholars and Leaders of the World [3]. Through observations, it is noted that individual achievements can be accomplished through mastery of knowledge and owning ethics and morality. The program encourages students to integrate diverse information and skills as students try and understand things that matter in real world. Within the R4S are reflected five (5) cores as shown in Figure 1:

1. Self-Potential:
   The students are taught to believe in his/her self-ability to succeed, no matter what challenges faced [4]. They have inner and outer potentials. The inner potential is the part that needs to be polished for them to become successful in life. The biggest potential actually the inner which is more than 90% while the outer potential is less than 10%. The students are encouraged to bring out their inner potential through giving tasks along the activities. They need to be punctual and force themselves to follow the rules and keep recording all activities.

2. Synergy:
   This refers to the interaction of collaboration between three (3) parties that having different areas of expertise, namely Academician, Islamic Religious Officer and Counselor, when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements and contributions. The students are taught that there are several elements to success. In this program, the entities of success are based on Academicians, Religious Officer and Counselor. The ability to combines these three (3) entities (synergize) greatly improve their chance of success in academic performance [5].

3. Insight:
   The students are taught to have insightful views of situations in order to make decisions. One must make a bold and correct decisions for the greater good, rather than a safe but incorrect decisions for the very few. Unworthy emotions should not come into play when making decisions as this may cloud their decision making judgement [6].

4. Heart to Heart:
   Student must display openness in communicating with the three (3) entities. The ability to effectively and openly communicate with Academicians, Religious Officer and Counselor will greatly enhance the speed of identifying the underlying problems affecting students’ academic performance [7]. They should accept the wrong doing and ready to move for a change according to the effective advices from the helper.

5. Guidance from Allah SWT:
   While the four (4) previous cores are within the limits of human capabilities, the final core is with respect to Islamic belief system. The programs instill a concept that only guidance and help from Allah SWT can help the student to improve their academic performance. One must understand that without this, no success can ever come by. However, without the four (4) cores of efforts, it would be impossible to succeed UNLESS Allah SWT commands so. In short, this program advocates the need to strive for success through various efforts as well as the need to ask for guidance from Allah SWT [8].

The R4S module helps students to gain insight and faith that they have tremendous potential. As a result, it indirectly advocates for student to make efforts to achieve SUCCESS. The efforts taken will stimulate their endeavour to disclose the true potential of themselves. The researchers are in the opinion that the students can benefit to the whole world, through this unique synergy. Hence, this will trigger the insight of participants. Each entity plays their own roles according the authority and expertise [9].

In reference to Figure 2, there are three (3) elements in the R4S concept. These are:
a. Participants:
   The participants (usually are the students) must initially have the desire for a change. The desire will cause the participants to recognize the weaknesses and facilitate them to accelerate the process of improving
themselves, although initially there was a rejection due to negative perceptions. Additionally, participants should have confidence that helpers can trigger their insight and develop the potential to become a success habits. Within the course, the participants are educated with things such as time management and self-management. For example, in one part of the module, the participants must communicate their exact time of prayers especially at the early, middle or the end of the given period. This activity is intentionally to create a sense of conscious that they were observed. This will leads indirectly the willing to perform prayers on time. Eventually perform players on time begins to benefit them and this will leads to be more responsible to bring a change for themselves [4, 5].

Fig. 1: The five (5) cores of R4S.

Fig. 2: R4S Concept.

b. Helper:
The task of helpers (Academicians, Religious Officer and Counsellor) is to build rapport and assured the participants that this program can enhance insight potential for success. The level of desire, passion and sincerity of the helpers are vital in ensuring the effectiveness of the activities carried out. The helpers should maximize their effort in the process of helping participants. The Helpers must have ability to see the true potential of participants. This ability is generated via experience in the education sector [6, 7].

c. The Change:
As creatures of Allah SWT, we have no power to guarantee or ensure that participants under the program should become a successful person. Helpers and participants must surrender and submit their believe that the Almighty GOD is THE AUTHORITY IN GIVING INSTRUCTIONS, AID and MERCY to whomever He wishes. The Helpers serves to COMMUNICATE and strive to provide an understanding of the importance of maintaining good relations with GOD Almighty and our fellow human beings [8, 10].

Results:
For the purpose of publication, the names of the participant were replaced by male and female to indicate the gender of the person. In this report, only a part of the participants showing the latest result from the previous semester. A total of 22 students from Faculty of Electrical Engineering took part in this research for the semester September 2014 – January 2015. In this case there are equally numbers of gender; eleven (11) students are female, while another eleven (11) are male. Table 1 depicts the changes in their academic result since enrolling into R4S course. All participants were chosen from the lowest CPA based on the previous semester (January – July 2014). All students having GPA< 2.5 were enrolled into this program for a period of three months. From
the table, as many as 18 participants (84%) showed improvements in their academic performances. Only four (4) participants (16%) showed decrease of academic performances since R4S enrolment. Additionally, from the 19 participants, six (6) of them managed to improved their GPA to above 3.00. Figure 3 shows the average result of participants for the Sept 2014 – Jan 2015 intake.

<table>
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<tr>
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From the participants’ feedback, it was acknowledged that the R4S module has positive influence on their daily lives. Not only has the course improved most of their academic achievements, but generally, there have been a degree of understanding between the Islamic faith and success among the students. Furthermore, the alumni of the R4S showing the spirit to improve themselves and maintain their performance even they not formally involve again in the program but they also volunteer to contribute as testimonial story teller to deliver their experience on the effectiveness of the program. Currently the number of alumni for this program is more than hundred persons.

Fig. 3: Average Results for R4S (Sept14-Jan15).

Conclusion:

The R4S has successfully met its objectives. The method used in R4S is through lectures, few other activities including individual and group counseling sessions for motivation and study techniques. Additionally, it also involves a continuous learning and level of spiritual well-being of the students. R4S has been implemented successfully at FKE, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and has been proven to increase student academic achievement for four sequences of semesters to at least six group of students that having GPA below 2.5. The results show that the minimal improvement recorded was 78% and the maximum was 96%. In this report focusing on the student semester September 2014 – January 2015 shows the result of 84% improvement from the whole number of 22 persons. This unique synergy of the collaboration between different areas of expertise is able to assist students to disclose their true potential in improving their academic performance.

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Currently this module was implemented in few other faculties and campus such as Mechanical Engineering, Applied Sciences and UiTM Perak.

REFERENCES