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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### IMPROVING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE THESIS FLOW BY USING 'THESIS MAP TECHNIQUES'

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#### Abstract

An understanding of the flow of thesis writing is very important to ensure good and quality research results. This situation always waves graduate students so that many lose during the presentation of the proposal (defense proposal) or during the oral examination (viva). The *Thesis Map* technique is an innovation in the teaching of research methods that uses the arrangement of thesis flow in a visual box. Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze the improvement of students' understanding of the mastery of thesis writing flow (thesis flow) by using the Thesis Map technique. The action research design was used to look at changes in student achievement in mastering the flow of thesis writing. A total of 4 PhD students from the subject of Research Methods (PPPY6283) were involved in this study. Students are taught the Thesis Map technique for 1 semester from April to July 2021. Effectiveness analysis is evaluated using three instruments namely Test-Before Action and Test-After Action, observation and presentation of research proposals. Findings show that there is an increase in students' understanding of the flow of thesis writing through the comparison of the results of the Pre-Action Test and Post-Action Test. Findings from the observation also found that students showed interest, enthusiasm and mastery of the subjects taught. The effectiveness of this technique is also evidenced by the acquisition of excellent proposal presenter marks between 36-39 out of a total of 40 marks. Therefore, the Thesis Map technique approach is an effective alternative medium for the subject of Research Methods. The implication is that UKM will be more distinguished with quality and impactful graduate research results.

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#### Introduction:-

The subject of Research Methods is a compulsory subject in every IPTA/IPTS in Malaysia, especially those offering studies at the graduate level. This subject is at the heart of the success of graduate students for the production of a good and excellent thesis. However, this subject is also among the killer subjects in the university because of the difficulty of students to integrate knowledge (theory) with actual (practical) writing in the thesis. This is because there are various disciplines that need to be digested by students starting from understanding how to make past research (literature review), finding research gaps, understanding the type and design of research, mastering the methods of data collection and analysis, determination of research samples, theoretical and conceptual determination



### Pre-Action Test

The Pre-Action Test covers 7 key items in looking at students' knowledge and understanding regarding thesis writing. The objective of this test is to obtain the findings and initial observation of the mastery of thesis writing flow among students that is the level of student achievement in the subject of Research Methods before the Map Box technique is used.

### After-Action Testing

For the After-Action test, the same number of items were re-tested, namely 7 main items given to the sample of students to see the student's achievement at the end of the semester. The objective of this test is to obtain the findings of mastery of thesis writing flow among students that is the level of student achievement in the subject of Research Methods before the Map Box technique is used.

### Observation:-

Observations were made throughout the tutorial class with the students. There are 8 tutorial meetings have taken place online. Starting the meeting to 4 students are required to make a presentation of the objectives of their respective studies based on the Map Box technique. Observations were made on the description of the relevance of each box's information, students' confidence and their ability to comment on a friend's Map Box.

### Presentation of Research Proposal

Students are given the task of presenting a research proposal at the end of the semester worth 40 marks. Scoring criteria are based on rubrics that have been set by the Graduate School of the Faculty of Islamic Studies. The scoring criteria include 7 main items in the Map Box.

### Implementation of the Study

#### i. Before Using the Map Thesis Technique

Students go through a pre-test to see their knowledge and understanding of the topic of marketing mix. The rubric of student ability scores in the early stages of this study was conducted at the Melaka Polytechnic in a teaching session within 120 minutes. The mark rubric refers to the range of scores obtained by students for each question.

#### While Using the Map Thesis Technique

1. Students
2. Questions
3. Discussion

#### After Using the Map Box Technique

Students go through a post-test to review their understanding and knowledge of the marketing mix topic. The scoring scheme is seen based on the score scores obtained by the students for each question item and the overall score. Data analysis was also performed by looking at individual grade achievement.

### Results and Discussion:-

#### Descriptive Analysis of Test-Before Action and Test-After Action

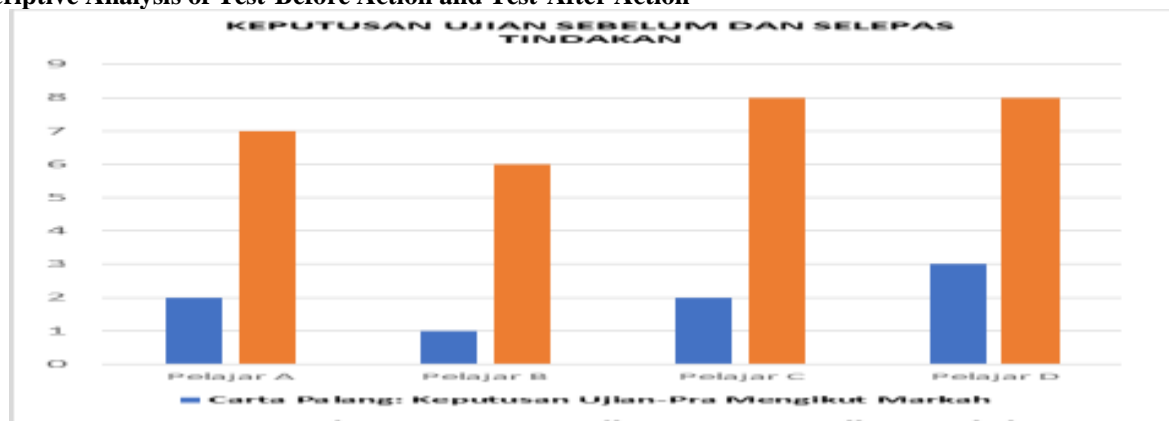


Figure 2:- Test-Before Action and Test-After Action Results According to Student Scores

The comparative analysis of Test-Before Action and Test-After Action clearly exhibited an increase in mean test effectiveness. The mean range score for the Before-action test was 20.0 and the mean range for the after-action test was 72.5. The level of improvement of the test mean can be interpreted based on Table 1 being at an excellent level.

**Table 1:-Comparative Analysis of Mean Range**

Analysis	Pre-Test	Post Test	Mean Range
Min	20	72.	52.

### Descriptive Analysis of Observation Data

To further strengthen the results of the study, several observations were made during the teaching and learning process. The four things observed were activism, enthusiasm, the ability to parse the contents in each Thesis Map box and the ability to evaluate a partner's Thesis Map. A total of 8 tutorial meetings (workshops) were conducted online during April-July 2021. The students were seen to show significant improvement over the four items observed and this showed their mastery and understanding of the thesis writing flow.

**Table 2:- Analysis of Observation Items on Students**

Students	Meetings 3-5				Meetings 6-8			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
Activeness	2	2	3	1	4	5	4	4
Ability to parse	2	2	1	1	4	3	4	3
Ability to evaluate	2	1	2	1	4	4	3	3
The spirit	3	3	3	2	5	5	4	4

### Descriptive Analysis of Proposal Presentation Assessment

All students are assigned to present a research proposal at the end of the semester. The evaluation of the proposal is based on the 7 main criteria in the Thesis Map and uses a special rubric. The results of the descriptive analysis on the acquisition of marks showed that all students obtained excellent marks and were able to master and understand the flow of thesis writing.

**Table 3:- Proposal Presentation Marks**

Bil	Students	Marks/40
1	A	39
2	B	36
3	C	38
4	D	37

The Thesis Map Technique that integrates knowledge (theory) into a visual box is an adaptation of the mind map technique. Effective teaching using visuals can stimulate students' brains and thinking more effectively. This coincides with the study of Othman and Othman (2012) and Kasim & Anderson (2010) who proved that visual teaching materials not only make it easier for students to remember important ideas but also make it easier for students to describe them. This is in line with the statement of Zain (2009) who stated that graphic materials and pictures drawn can stimulate thinking, facilitate understanding and strengthen the memory of students (Sulistiyaningsih, 2010). In addition, the use of mind maps as teaching materials will make teaching more interesting and provide space for students to be actively involved. The activity of students in following the teaching is certainly a positive sign of their learning achievement (Buzan, 2005). Lecturers' satisfaction with student achievement opens up space to use creativity in addition to P&P without feeling bored.

### Conclusion:-

The Thesis Map technique approach is an effective alternative medium for the subject of Research Methods. The effectiveness of using this technique is significant with the goal to be achieved in Thrust 5 of UKM's excellence strategy in the i-Mind component to produce leading and excellent students and lecturers. Therefore, based on these needs, it shows the importance of Research Methods instructors in particular given trainings such as ToT Workshops or short courses on the use of Thesis Map techniques in teaching and learning. With the training will be able to

provide opportunities for instructors to implement teaching and learning using Thesis Map technique more effectively and comprehensively in all faculties in UKM

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