SALeW: A NON-LAW STUDENTS' TOOL FOR LEGAL WRITING

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ABSTRACT

In Universiti Teknologi MARA, certain courses for example, Bachelor in Business Administration and Bachelor of Accountancy, require students to take up law subjects as one of the requirements to complete the course. In law classes, legal writing starts when students are required to answer law questions. Legal writing is a huge problem to non-law students as they do not know where to start and what to write. For them, writing is perceived as a daunting task. To improve the writing process of answering law questions students are required to know the format of answering the questions. A study is carried out to find a new way to help non-law students who undertake law subjects to answer law questions properly. The study developed a smartphone application that can guide the students throughout the writing process. The application is called Smartphone Assisted Legal Writing (SALeW). SALeW contains two parts. The first part requires the students to fill in all necessary information relating to the question. For the second part, the smartphone application processes the information provided and finally, generate a complete answer. Frequent used of SALeW can improve students' legal writing skills. This is the main reason behind the development of the application. Smartphone is chosen as a tool for writing because it seems that university students nowadays are inseparable from their smartphones as smartphone has become their main source of information. Ownership of smartphones among students are also increasing and some of them are using smartphone to enhance their learning and they favor this method either in class or outside class. Furthermore, the usage of technology in teaching and learning is one of the main objectives in the 2015- 2025 Malaysia Education Blueprint – Higher Education(PPM-PT). The development of SALeW has given a new hope to the non- law students to enable them to come out with a good legal writing.

Keywords: SALeW, smartphone, legal writing, non-law students, smartphone assisted

INTRODUCTION

In Universiti Teknologi MARA, certain courses require students to take up law papers as one of the requirements to complete the course. Example of courses are Bachelor in Business Administration and Bachelor of Accountancy. These non-law students may not have difficulties when learning law but may find difficulties when trying to answer law questions as students are expected to answer exam question in form of an essay.

Legal writing starts when students are required to answer law questions. Answering law questions is a huge problem to non-law students as they do not know where to start and what to write. For them, writing is perceived as a daunting task in law classes. To improve the writing process of answering law questions students are required to know the format of answering the questions. A study is carried out in order to find a new way to help non-law students who undertake law papers to answer law questions properly. The study developed a smartphone application that is able to guide the students throughout the writing process. It is called SALeW (Smartphone Assisted Legal Writing). It is timely for universities in Malaysia to venture into mobile learning as the interest and innovation of using mobile technologies has started in the Western countries as early as 2005 (Kukulskaa-Hume & Traxler, 2005). Previous studies conducted in this field confirmed the benefits of mobile learning and the benefits have been documented (Alrasheedi & Capretz, 2015). This is a justification for universities in Malaysia to adopt mobile learning as it also provides learning flexibility.

The study chooses smartphone as a tool for writing as it seems that university students nowadays are inseparable from their smartphones. Smartphone has become their main source of information (Wong, 2011). Ownership of smartphones among students are also increasing and they are using them to enhance their learning (Woodcock, 2012; Dixit et. al., 2011). In the era of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), integration of technology with old school methods of teaching should be promoted as it may improve students' writing skill. According to Farley *et.al.* (2015), students actively using mobile technologies such as smartphones to support their learning and they favour this method either in class or at a distance. Suki & Suki (2007) found that the usage of smartphones for learning purposes should be encouraged as the students will gain a higher level of knowledge, become more socially involve and have an extensive networking outside the classroom. These attitudes will benefit the students later on when they venture into working environment.

ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

SALeW is useful to the non-law students as it will guide the students as to the steps required in answering law questions. Lecturer needs to show the students what are required in the answer and later the students can practice writing on their own assisted by SALeW. SALeW can be used by having the students to install the application in their smartphones. The students then can use SALeW anywhere and everywhere to practise answering law questions as it will guide the students as to the steps required. By having SALeW, it will promote independent study which is in line with the 2015-2025 Malaysian Education Blueprint – Higher Education (PPPM-PT) which aims *inter alia* to produce holistic valuable graduates. Independent study is important to inculcate values among students which later can be reinforced and incorporated in the working environment upon graduation. Furthermore, this study also illustrates the support for blended learning program which is implemented in Universiti Teknologi MARA.

METHODOLOGY

The development of SALeW follows the waterfall methodology, linear approach to software development. It requires each stage to be completed before the developer can proceed to the next stage. Since Android is currently the most popular smartphone operating system among the users, this study chooses android platform for the development. The development of SALeW consists of four phases, namely, analysis, design, development and testing.

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During the analysis phase, requirements for the application were studied. This is important to ensure a creation of a successful system. The format of legal writing is identified at this stage. In the design phase, interface of SALeW is identified. Features which are user friendly were introduced. These features need to be easy to use so as not to confuse the students. Words used for the interface must be short and precise so that it is easy for the students to navigate SALeW. The third phase is the development of SALeW. This phase involved building the application coding and suitable interface is produced at this stage. The last phase is testing. The developed SALeW is tested to ensure its smooth running. SALeW was tested on 102 non-law students who enrolled in Bachelor of Business Administration. SALeW was introduced in Business Law (Law 416) classes. The students were asked to use SALeW to answer law questions. 84% of the students were satisfied with SALeW as a guidance for legal writing.
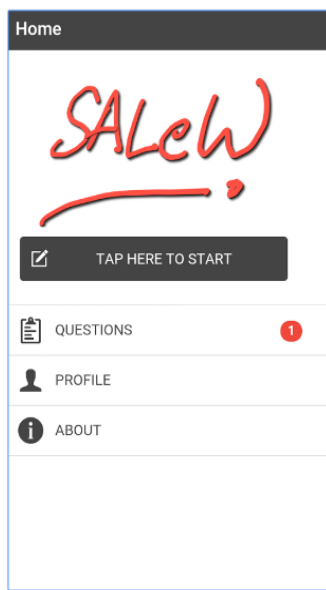
THE PROCESS of SALeW

The smartphone application will contain two parts. During the first part, the format of writing is identified. In order to come out with good legal writing, the students need to follow the format of writing which includes issue, legal principles, case (if any), application and conclusion. The students need to fill in all the relevant information. If the students do not follow this format, they will not get good marks for their legal writing. Figure 1 shows the screenshots of process of SALeW which consists of 6 stages.

In stage 1, students need to key in their 'Profile'. Then they need to tap the screen to start. In stage 2, students need to key in the 'Question Lable' for example: Law 416, Exam Dec. 2017, Question 1. Then the students need to press 'Next' button to go to stage 3. Stage 3 requires the student to fill in the 'Issue' column. Students need to type in the issue involves in the question. Then the students need to press 'Next' to go to stage 4. To write legal principle, students need to tap 'Add Legal Principle' button. When the button is tapped, the application will be directed to stage 4. At this stage, students need to key in the relevant legal principle, application for legal principle, case (if any), application for case (if any). Then students need to tap 'Add/Edit Legal Principles' button to add more legal principles. After the students are finished with the legal principles, they need to tap 'Next' button whereby students will be directed to 'Conclusion' page whicn is stage 5. Students then need to key in the conclusion. At this point, first part of the application is completed.
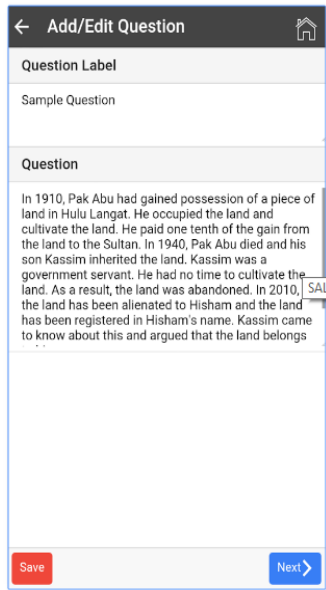
The second part of SALeW involves processing of the information provided by the students. After the information is processed, SALeW will generate a complete answer in form of an essay as illustrated in stage 6. This complete answer can be kept by the students for their own use when preparing for the exam. This complete answer can also be printed and submitted to the lecturer for the answer to be graded. This can be done by tapping 'Send Email' button at the bottom of the page. Using this application can promote independent study among the students aided by smartphone.

It is timely to have this smartphone application because students are well acquainted with smartphone and this habit can be used for their own benefit. The smartphone application is designed in such a way that students will be able to practise answering law question anywhere and at any time. The steps required in the smartphone application is the basis for the student to master legal writing.

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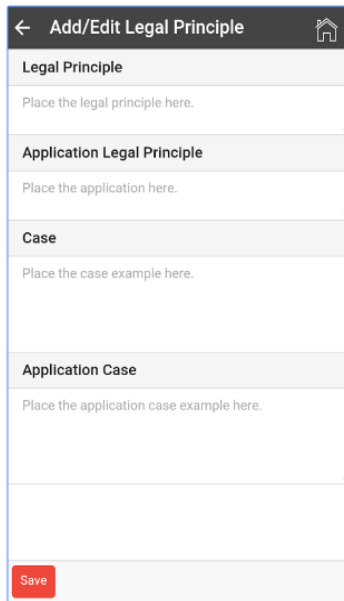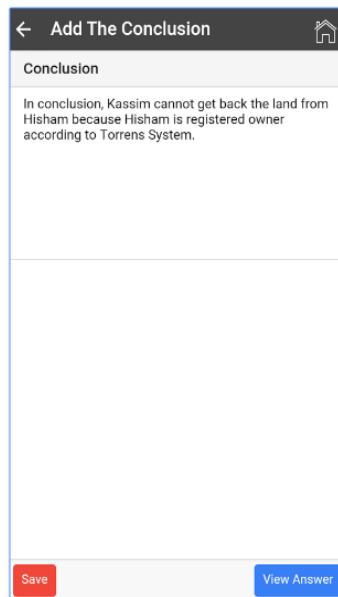Figure 1: Screenshots of process of SALeW

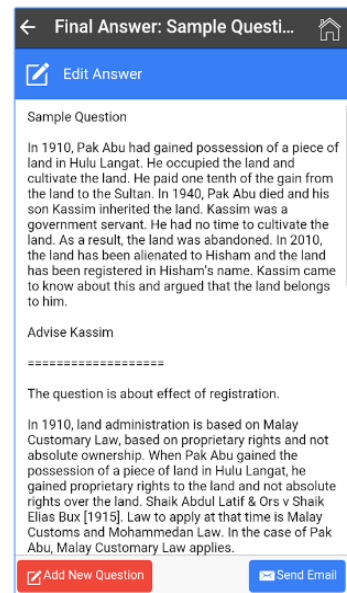| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |

| Stage 4 | Stage 5 | Stage 6 |

CONCLUSION

This study intends to help the non-law students to come out with a good legal writing. In order to do this, a smartphone application has been developed which is called SALeW. SALeW is developed in such a way that students are guided to follow the format of writing. The format of legal writing consists of introduction/ issue, legal principles, cases, application and conclusion. If the students are able to follow this format of writing, students would be

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able to get good grades for their writing. SALeW is an application which is quite handy. Thus, students can practice legal writing almost everywhere. This study is an important contribution to the area of teaching and learning law among non-law students as students are guided with the application installed in their own smartphones and they are able to use this tool inside or outside the classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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