

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Accounting students' perspective of learning law course

Hanna Ambaras Khan

School of Business and Economics, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor 43400, Malaysia; hanna@upm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Law subject is not exclusive to law students only. There are many faculties that offer law subjects to the students. In terms of teaching and learning law, there are a few methods such as lectures, drafting, and case study. However, teaching law to non-law students needs creativity. The non-law student's perception of law subject is important to develop interest in the learning process. Most non-law students thought law was difficult and uninteresting. Hence, there is a need to revise the method of teaching and learning to attract students' attention and interest and to change their perception of learning law subjects. The objective of this research is to study the change in the accounting students as non-law students' perspective in learning law using a mix of conventional and revised methods, and whether there is any change in their perception. This paper adopts a qualitative research method to collect data. The findings of the research show that a mix of conventional traditional, and revised methods changed students' perspectives about learning law subjects. The mixed method is seen as fun and suitable for accounting students to learn law. It is suggested to have many other activities created as assessment methods in teaching law to accounting students.

Keywords: accounting students, company law, pedagogy, non-law students, teaching method

1. Introduction

Law course is taught in many programs such as economics, engineering, and architecture. It is not an exclusive subject for law students only. Company law is one of the law courses offered to accounting students at the School of Business and Economics ("SPE"), Universiti Putra Malaysia ("UPM"). Thus, it is important to be creative in developing interest and ensuring students' engagement in law course classes. The author has experience teaching clinical subjects to final year students, mooting, and law courses to law students from the faculty of law. The teaching and learning process between the law students and the accounting students are different. The method adopted in teaching law students is mostly traditional. It is crucial to ensure the students are prepared to be future lawyers either practicing or non-practising. However, the objective of offering law courses to accounting is to ensure the students are aware of the existence of laws relating to their discipline and its application in real life.

This paper discusses the method of teaching law courses to law students, and to non-law students i.e., accounting students. The objective of this research is to study the accounting students' perspective in learning law courses using a mix of conventional and revised methods. Further, this research aims to study if there is any change in accounting students' perception of learning law. Non-law students think law course is difficult

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and they need to read and memorize a lot^[1]. Their thought demotivated them from taking law courses. Law is an important subject for accounting students. These students will be the future accountants or auditors. Hence, they must know, understand, and digest the subject. Students' lack of interest in the subject resulted in bad grades, and they were unable to grasp the knowledge (Author's personal observation). Hence, the findings of this research contribute to the best method to transfer knowledge to the students, and the students' perception of learning law.

From the findings, the traditional and revised traditional method (mixed method) is suitable to be applied in teaching law to accounting students. The activities designed achieved the objective of teaching and learning law. The accounting students found that it is easy to learn law with the mixed method. At the beginning of the semester, they think that law is a difficult course. However, at the end of the semester, they found it easy and interesting. Accounting students enjoy learning law.

2. Literature review

Teaching law to law students has its challenges. There are many teaching methods for law students. The methods might be traditional or revised. The objective of the methods is obvious i.e., to ensure the students can grasp the law and its application, especially in resolving problematic law questions since it represents real-life questions. Zeigler^[2] explains that in teaching law, the first class is important to show the preparation made by the lecturer for the whole semester, and to convey necessary information to the students. It is also important to prepare for each class. He further explains that during the class, students are called to answer questions to encourage them to prepare and be ready for the class. Students are encouraged to ask questions to ensure they understand the information given by the lecturer. According to him, situations that may cause stress, tension, and humiliation to the students must be avoided. It is better to keep the class between formal and informal situations. In the conventional method of teaching, the lecturer uses class notes and case laws. The literature discusses the normal method of teaching law courses.

Acharjee^[3] shares that there are a few methods of teaching law. First, the Socratic method where the lecturer interrogates the students with questions and fewer lectures given in the class. This method is still being used in many law schools. The advantage of this method is to ensure the students' minds are present and ignited with a lot of thoughts, and they can respond immediately to a given question. This method helps to develop the debating skills of law students. Second, the lecture method is the oldest method of teaching. It is upon the lecturer to make the class interesting and attract the student's attention to the subject. The lecturer explains the objective of the lecturer and the outcome and goal to be achieved. Third, the case study method where the students are required to study different judgments from higher courts and sometimes lower courts. Fourth, is the adversarial method in which the students are taught to draft documents from the beginning of the court process until the end. It imparts drafting skills and knowledge of process and procedure. Fifth, the group discussion method requires the students to discuss a given problem and provide a solution. It enhances skills to interpret law, leadership skills, and sharing of knowledge. Sixth, the cooperative teaching method is where an expert in the area is invited to teach a subject such as Labour Laws. Lastly, a clinical method that involves practical drafting and case presentation. However, there is no discussion on the method of teaching non-law students. Upadhyay^[4] also discusses methods for teaching law students. He highlighted that clinical legal education is moving towards online study. However, many countries and law schools have yet to adopt it. The literature suggests that law educators to include an experience-based or activity-based model in teaching law. The literature also suggests certain subjects adopt certain activities such as drafting public interest litigation documents for the Constitutional law subject. The author shared how the students are going to be evaluated, graded, and given marks. Unfortunately, the literature covers law students only.

Morris^[5] explains that in teaching law subjects, the educator has no room to change the content, but they are welcome to be creative and adopt different pedagogical methods. Teaching law leaves no liberty to the educator to engage in activities adopted by other disciplines. Law schools adopt a distinct method of teaching since the students' motivation to be there is to be legal practitioners. Unlike the non-la school method of teaching law. The students must learn the law to avoid any illegal act or misconduct in the future, not to be legal practitioners. The non-law students are required to acquire mere knowledge of law subjects. The method used for teaching non-law students and law students must not be the same. However, in both cases, the students' work is monitored and thereafter graded. As for non-law students, it is only fair to them if the institution gives them a chance to be fully integrated in their area of work. Teaching law to them without giving them a chance to practice the law is considered lip serving. It is good to teach law to non-law students but there is a gap in doing so. The gap is what is the best method. Hence, in this paper, the research done showed the students learn real-life usage of the law through the activities. This paper covered the gap shown in the earlier literature.

Cameroon^[6] shares that law education for business students and law students is not a similar process. Law students read, discuss cases, and analyze as required by the curriculum. It is part of their legal training. For business students, the lecturer emphasizes the law itself and its application in real life. The accounting students see the company law subject as" dull", "dry" and "not very interesting". The author created a game named Corporate Villain for accounting students and used storytelling in teaching law. In each class, the students are required to reveal a corporate villain for approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The storytelling of the corporate villain engaged students at the beginning of the lecture. The game influenced the students to learn legal concepts in corporate and connect the law to real-life issues. Students agreed -that the method is good, very good, and excellent in helping them understand the course.

Razak et al.^[1] in "Teaching law to non-law background students: Challenges and strategies" share that non-law students perceive law subjects as difficult. They are struggling with the subjects since they must answer the question in an essay form. So, the teaching method must be suitable for the students. It must not be traditional in total. The lecturer must be active in explaining legal jargon if it is used in the lecture to ensure the students understand the terms. In the article, the authors suggested that students form a group to study law subjects, participate in class, avoid using mobile phones during class hours unless for academics, and read textbooks, and notes and prepare for class.

In his article, Raushan^[7] shares that there are three basic techniques for teaching and learning law for law students. First, the lecture method is used to explain terminologies or legal theories to students. Second, the case method is adopted to enhance the ability of students to resolve legal issues by applying legal principles, knowledge, ideas, and skills. Third, the seminar method where several students gathered and worked together to resolve legal problems by applying a legal approach and analysis. On top of the basic techniques, law students are expected to participate in extracurricular activities. For example, the moot court competition where the students act as counsel in a proper court scenario, the client counseling that allows the student to act as a lawyer interviewing clients, and the internship where the students learn about the real experience of the legal professional life of lawyers. In the literature, the discussion stresses the activities that are designed for law students.

According to Khan^[8], these methods may be revised in teaching accounting students. In her article "Business students' perspective of learning law education", she states that law subject is also offered in other courses. Khan explains that it is important for the lecturer to choose a suitable method for teaching law to non-law students. A suitable assessment method reduces the fear of law subjects in the eyes of non-law students and makes them comfortable in the learning process. The activities such as acting as a judge develop problem-

solving skills. Other programs or degrees that teach law subjects like civil engineering. It is found that students from other disciplines struggle to learn law subjects. They face challenges in studying the subject due to the amount of reading required and the way to study the subject.

Allen^[9] shares that in teaching law, there is a direct relationship between teachers, students, and subject matter. The appropriate way of teaching law to students from different disciplines is to design an approach that relates to their area. In teaching law to non-law students, the teaching method is an additional role. The main role is to ensure students see the relation between law and their discipline. According to Allen^[9], the missing part in teaching law to non-law students is the lecturer's failure to understand that students are unable to digest law subjects if they fail to see the nexus between law and their discipline which causes them unable to study law or study with great difficulties.

According to DeSilva and Cowap^[10], non-law students are not aware of the importance of learning law. It is because they see law as irrelevant until they graduate and face the real world of work. Further, the law is perceived as hard due to the unfamiliar terminology. The background of the lecturer who teaches law to non-law students is important. The pedagogic adopted might imitate the way the lecturer learned law. Lectures are considered a traditional method of teaching. It is suggested by DeSilva and Cowap^[10] those other methods such as delivery of material using online tools or having a small class. They suggested that notes be bound into books. Scenarios and case studies may be adopted as methods of teaching. They stressed that teaching law to students from diverse backgrounds needs careful planning between the delivery way of information and assessment.

In "Teaching business law to non-law students, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse ('CaLD') students and large class", Kariyawasam and Low^[11] discussed that teaching and assessing students from different disciplines is a challenge. They suggested that educators integrate formative assessment methods in teaching law to non-law students. According to them, there are three challenges arising in teaching law to non-law students. First, the non-law students are not equipped with core skills in learning law. It is obvious that the characteristics of law students and non-law students are different, and this factor must be taken into account in designing teaching strategies. Second, the non-law students perceive law subjects as difficult. They feel nervous and doubt their ability to study the subject. Due to these, the teaching effectiveness is reduced. Third, the scope of the lecture needs to be revised to ensure it can be taught within the semester. There are seven solutions suggested to resolve issues in teaching law to non-law students. First, changing of teaching methodology. This is important to reduce the pressure on non-law students. Second, using certain strategies and techniques in teaching. Third, using of flow chart to illustrate the steps to analyse and answer legal problems. It gives a proper understanding of the law. Fourth, the steps of answering law questions which consist of Issue, Law, Application, and Conclusion. It assists the students to slowly develop skills in answering the question. Fifth, assessment questions are designed in a way that the students can see the nexus between law and the course of study. Sixth, to provide lecture notes with limited legal content to encourage the student to refer to textbooks. Seventh, discuss a hypothetical question at the end of the lecture with students. The above literature discusses on teaching method adopted to teach law to law students and non-law students. However, there are no specific activities discussed that may be used for accounting students. This paper discusses the gap in teaching law using mixed methods to accounting students.

3. Research methodology

This research adopted a qualitative method. A library-based method is used to collect data for the background of this paper. The author's personal observation in conducting class is included in writing this paper. Further, the survey is adopted to collect data in studying the accounting students' perspective in learning

law using a mix of conventional and revised methods. A qualitative survey is adopted because it generates data, and the process is cheap. However, this method is not widely used and is not included in qualitative methods. It is suitable for small projects, and it allows the researcher to access the respondents' views without having an interview session. However, the respondents must use their own words and share their opinions in the survey. The question in the survey depends on the research question and the depth of the research^[12]. A qualitative survey is explanatory. The words written by the respondents are analyzed. It is used to learn about the opinions of the respondents^[13]. A qualitative survey is an advantage to the researcher who is underutilized^[14].

In collecting data, the survey is divided into 3 parts. First, the students comment on the activities; second, the students' comments on the method of teaching adopted, and third, the students' opinion on the subject after learning law for 14 weeks. However, the participation is voluntary. The survey form is shared with all the students There were 45 students, however, out of the total number of students only 39 students participated in the survey. This research involves subject Law 4321 (Company Law) and the students of the cohort Semester 1, 2021/2022. It is important to study the students' perspective on learning law to attract students' attention and interest in the subject. The students are from different countries such as Malaysia, India, China, Bangladesh, and Iran. The limitation of this research is the survey is conducted for Company Law students only. This is because the activities are designed especially for them with the aim to change their perception of learning law, and to ensure the students who learn law at the SPE. In collecting data, the survey includes open-ended and closed-ended questions. The earlier is used to obtain information on the students' opinions about the subject and the activities. The latter is used to obtain students' personal information such as name, matriculation card number, and country of origin.

In teaching law subjects, all notes, case laws, and legislations are uploaded to the university platform known as PutraBlast. The system also is used to upload discussion topics, and activity questions, give announcements, and final examinations (if it is online). The delivery of information is done through lectures face-to-face or online and YouTube videos (Hanna Ambaras Khan's Channel). In every lecture, the students need to summarise and share their understanding of the topic at the end of the class. The students are not forced to answer but based on volunteerism. In the first class, the teaching plan which includes the topics, the activities, and the assessments' dates is shared with the students. A brief explanation is given relating to the course and activities to be done for the whole semester. The objective is to ensure students are aware of the topic, activities, assessment, and class replacement due to public holidays (if any) that will be conducted for the whole course. Whilst assessing the students, they are divided into groups of 4 or 5. Formative assessments are done in a group or are assigned as a group work. While summative assessments are done individually. Three activities are formative, and 3 summative assessments 1 and 2 where the questions are multi-choices and true or false questions, and a final examination comprises 2 parts; part A consist of 1 compulsory essay question and part B consists of 4 problematic questions where the students need to choose and answer 2 questions only.

The 3 activities involve research, speaking, analyzing, leadership, and presentation skills. In the first activity "My Company", the students are required to form a company and fill up all the relevant forms which can be acquired online, prepare the constitution of the company, and present the outcome. This activity is like a clinical activity done by law faculty. In the second activity "My Court Case", the students were instructed to choose a case (from the list given by the lecturer), study the case, and present it as a mock hearing presentation. The students play the role of the plaintiff's lawyer, the defendant's lawyer, and the judge. In this activity, the students need to divide the case into three parts: the plaintiff's submission, the defendant's submission, and the judgment. In the third activity "Let Me Advise You", each group is instructed to find a recent issue relating

to a breach of duty by an auditor or a company secretary. This activity is revised from the conventional method of teaching law, i.e., case study. The students need to discuss the breaches of laws and the relevant Malaysian laws involved in the issue and suggest prevention measures, and the lesson a young auditor or company secretary can learn from the discussion.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Findings of survey 1 on activities

From the students' comments on Activity 1 "My Company", it can be concluded that they learned how to register a company practically and draft their constitution. The students feel they have acquired new knowledge which is useful for them in the future. They have more of an understanding of the Constitution by drafting it rather than listening to lectures in class. The following are a few samples of the student's comments:

"From this activity, I have learned the flow of company registration".

"Company Constitution was my favourite part as I enjoyed searching for the information from various sources."

"Learnt about the company constitution and the company registration."

"I get the new knowledge and how to register for my company."

"I am enjoying this activity because we act like we want to create our own company in real."

"Activity 1 for me was great because I was able to understand more about the constitution of the company other than just learning in class."

"I think it is the first time I visited the SSM (Companies Commission of Malaysia) webpage. I can learn clearly how a business registers their business."

"Activity 1 gave me some knowledge about how to organize a company and know the constitution that I have never known before this."

"Get a little bit of knowledge to use in the future. who knows one day I will do some business; with knowledge, I know what to do and where to refer?"

"Activity 1 is the best because we could imagine building our own company"

From the students' comments on Activity 2 "My Court Case", it can be concluded that they learned about the procedure of the court, analyzing case law, and how to apply case laws learned in the lecture. The students also developed or improved communication and presentation skills. The following are a few samples of the student's comments:

"The one that simulation or acting in court is good for comprehension".

"I hope this activity will continue next term. It led me to use the law more clearly to analyze cases. By switching identities, defendant, plaintiff, and judge. Having different identities leads me to consider different views and apply different laws in a case."

"Online courts enable us to simulate real court scenes and gain a better understanding of legal knowledge." "In my opinion, this activity provides numerous benefits for students. It helped the students become accustomed to reading and observing through the case. Most importantly, I can experience the process and situation in court through this online court activity, even if only through virtual conduct."

"My opinion on activity 2 is made me know how to solve the case by the court. Activity 2 is the best activity, and I cannot forget because I can be entered in the court even if not reality."

"I get to understand the general flow of a court hearing. I even get to act it out which is kind of cool!" "It was helpful in a way it improved our communication and presentation skills through exchanging ideas and finding ways to give the best presentation." "Awesome. because we need to explore real cases that occurred in this world and have a chance to interpret our understanding in the activity."

"Fun experience doing the illustration for court cases. Helps me give a clearer view of what happened in the court."

"Activity 2 is interesting because we act in the court even though it might be different from the real one. Then, it is good to make us really understand the topic by presenting the case."

"Activity 2 is interesting because we have to act as a judge, plaintiff, and defender. It teaches me a lot about the intonation and formal words used in courts."

From the students' comments on Activity 3 "Let Me Advise You", it can be concluded that they learned about the mistake committed by the auditor and company secretary, the legal implications of breaching the laws, and how to avoid the breach in the future. They also learned about the real issues facing the audit or company secretary's firm. The following are a few samples of the student's comments:

"It is close to me too since I study auditing, so it is a good case for me to learn so in the future if I am an auditor, I will be very careful not to make mistakes regarding the law."

"I think the lesson we learn about the case we studied helps an auditor/ accountant to be like us."

"This Activity makes me gain more knowledge on the issue of auditor... I read the news about an auditor taking a bribe to cover any error in some company which somehow makes me angry. Overall, it is a good initiative to make me know more about our big 4 audit companies like ****."

"This activity can help us in about the attitude of an auditor and what will happen to him if he does not carry out his duties as an auditor"

"For Activity 3, I think it can make us more understand about auditors and secretary duties in law, since this activity makes us find some cases that related to audit fraud, etc."

"Activity 3 is helpful for me to understand the auditor and secretary topics."

"Since I'm an accounting student, so I can understand well about this activity as it relates to auditing."

"Activity 3 was an activity involving a case auditor who had breached the law. I can conclude that, what I learned in audit and law class, I can apply in activity 3."

"In activity 3, I learned what the possible problems that an auditor or secretary can do to their clients based on current issues. So, it is a good activity to improve my knowledge of current issues regarding the auditor or company secretary."

"There are many issues related to auditors and the big audit firms."

4.2. Findings of survey 2 on teaching method

From the students' comments on the teaching method adopted it can be concluded that the students found the method interesting, suitable, and relaxing. The following are a few samples of the student's comments:

"Interesting"

"Method that has adopted by the lecturer should be maintained since it is really useful for the understanding of the students."

"I like it very much when you give life lessons its connection with law subject."

"This method enables us to manage our time well."

"Just as I said, it is a good teaching method to help students understand better. Also, when you gave us an activity to solve, it made us understand more deeply about the topic."

"I love Dr. Hanna teaching's method. It is not stressful."

"I think the method adopted works for me. The lecturer explains the topics slowly, not too fast. Then the activities given are making me understand better."

"Great & Fabulous! At every end of the class, the lecturer will ask about what we learn, making us focus on her lecture."

"Dr.'s method was great; it straightforwardly engaged the students to pay attention to the lecture."

"I believe the method used by Dr Hanna can make us as students learn effectively."

"The method that the lecturer is suitable and relaxing."

"I like your style, the way you teach us. not to force us to understand even though outsiders poison our mentality by saying the law is hard."

"The method adopted by the lecturer is good because she always explains clearly despite not being easy to understand."

4.3. Findings of survey 3 on students' opinion on the subject after 14 weeks

From the students' comments on their opinion on the subject after 14 weeks of learning law, it can be concluded that the students' perception of law changed. The students liked the law subject more, they learned that law subject requires them to focus on the lecture, the subject is practical, not difficult, and interesting. The following are a few samples of the student's comments:

"Law subject quite fun when students could understand and enjoy it."

"Law is not that bad if I focus during the class".

"It's easy if we understand the topic."

"Law is not that difficult if proper approach to teaching is applied."

"Actually, this subject is quite difficult but when I listened to what the lecturer taught, I was able to remember even though a little bit especially the case."

"Law is easy when you know the key, understand that concept law and you get the easy of law."

"Sometimes we think too much about the matter is difficult, until after the matter becomes difficult, it is true that people say if you want to learn something you have to have a teacher to make it easier."

"Law can be learned in many ways, not only directly from books."

"Not as hard I thought it would be, easy to grasp the law and its applications."

"Law is not that difficult if proper approach to teaching is applied."

"It's a boring subject that can be turned into a fun subject if you have a fun lecturer."

"Law is a subject that we have to spend more time with, in order to like it. we will love it when we understand what we learn. not going to lie, I love and very anticipated to learn law because you know when we go out, we can apply it whenever someone trying to go against you for something."

"Law is a fun subject. Unlike what I always hear about the subject before, it is much more interesting than what I have heard."

"Law is easy if your lecturer explains it in a simple way using familiar/simple words, not law language." "Through these 14 weeks, I learned that law is not that difficult if it is done the right way."

"I was always enthusiastic about learning law. By the end of the class, I am even more eager to learn and understand more relevant laws and regulations in the future. I strongly believe this is where the role of a teacher comes in. They can make a student inclined to a subject or be averse to it. My continued fondness of the subject is an ode and can be attributed to my lecturer, in this case. Thank you."

From the first, second, and third surveys, it is found that the results of the surveys achieve the objective of the research. The first activity is designed to expose the students to the real-life situation of registering a company. This is agreed by the students when they admitted that they experienced the process of registering a company, the process and procedure, and this activity will be beneficial for them in the future. The second activity is created to ensure the students can understand the case law whenever they read it. This is admitted by the students who shared that they felt like they were present in court, and they have a better illustration of

the court activities from a practical way. The third activity is intended for the students to learn laws through mistakes committed by the current auditors, accountants, and secretaries. The students stated that they learned from the real situations that might be committed in the future if they are not aware of the laws. The result of findings from the second survey achieved the objective of this research i.e., to develop students' interest in learning law. The students found the method used in teaching law to be good, suitable, and relaxing. The result of findings from the third survey also shows that the objective of this research to study the changes in students' perspective in learning law courses is achieved. The students have changed their opinion about learning law in week 14 or the final week of the semester. They changed from having negative perspective to a positive one. The students admitted that the law course is fun, not hard, easy, and not difficult if the proper approach is applied and eager to learn more relevant law in the future.

It is clear from the findings that the activities designed allow the students to have a better understanding of law courses. Further, the students learned more when the activities involved practical, compared to listening to lectures in the class. The activities allow the accounting students to have information about case law, court procedure, the tasks of lawyers and judges, and the process of making a case law judgment in a practical way. This information might not be imparted in total successfully in lectures or tutorials. They learned about the implications of a breach of laws and the statutory duty of the company's directors, auditors, etc. hands-on. The experience they gained in the class through the lectures and the activities has changed their opinion and perception about learning law courses. The students admit that they have learned law courses in an effective way. Thus, the findings show that teaching law courses to non-law students using a mix of conventional and revised methods changed their perspective on law courses.

The findings are important as they show the relevancy of the activities to achieve the purpose or the objective of this research. It is reiterated that the purpose of having the activities is to draw attention and gain accounting students' interest in learning law courses. Further, the activities are meant to change the student's perspective that law is not a difficult subject. It can be a friendly and exciting subject if the correct method is adopted. This research implication is important as the activities discussed herein may be a guide to others in creating activities in the law class. It may be a reference for lecturers who teaches law course to non-law students. This research shows that a law lecturer may improvise the traditional method of teaching law to create an interesting new activity. Furthermore, the combination of a traditional teaching method and a revised method of teaching law is helpful to develop non-law students' interest in the subject. This research has achieved its objective which means that the activities shared in this research may be applied by others in teaching law.

5. Conclusion

Law course is seen as a difficult and uninteresting course. The accounting students' perspective of learning law courses is important as it affects their class participation. Hence, it is critical to change their perception in learning law courses. The mixed method of teaching and learning law adopted in this research assists the students to enjoy learning law and change their opinion about law courses. In this research, the activities achieved the objective of the subject to develop the students' analyzing, drafting, and speaking skills. Moreover, from the findings, those activities are suitable for accounting students to learn law. The students found the subject easy and wished to learn more. Their perception of learning law changes. It is hoped there will be more research conducted in the future using other types of activities relate law to the real life of the field. For example, law and real-life architecture activities. It is also hoped that future research will be done using new teaching methods such as online or offline games for business management or accounting students.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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