

Examining Factors affecting Academic Performance in Sindh University Dadu Campus

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Abstract

There have been concerns about the academic performance of students at graduate level. However there are limited data available on this phenomenon. The aim of this study was to examine the factors affecting academic performance in Sindh University Dadu Campus. The study has utilized the interview guide to collect the response from the students of Department of Business Administration, English and Information Technology respectively. The data was collected by using purposive sampling method. The collected data was further transcribed and categorized into themes. Four categories were extracted to further design the themes as: Module Contents, Assessment Feedback, Teaching Methodology and Students' Academic Challenges. The participants' views has developed a path to conclude the study on the basis of module nature, feedback system, academic skills. It is noted with high regards that the teachers should prepare themselves while entering into class. They should ensure the presentation of subject somewhat interesting as it matches with the subject contents. It is hoped from the campus administration that the concerns raised by students about feedback system will be improved for better results in future regarding academic achievement.

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For the first year students the academic writing competition, lecture programs should be arranged as the newly coming students may be empowered to face the language problems during university life.

Key word: *Module content, teaching Methodology, Academic Challenges, Feedback System*

Introduction

Though so many policies formulated, commissions established, plans executed, emergency implemented in education sector of Pakistan from time to time to improve the quality of education in Pakistan. Unfortunately not achieved sufficient outcomes in sector. Reforms formulated but not proper implemented to uplift the level of education.

All such reforms have only motive to improve education. Almost education improvement initiatives were considered as key component of change.

For measuring the improvement in education can be determined through attaining excellence in students' learning. It is needed to focus on climate of institute and teachers' performance evaluation.

Basically, education at all levels dwells on effective teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning are indicators of quality teachers and quality teaching performance which are all determining factors of a well-designed educational system (Campbell, 2015).

The most important mainstays of any university is the quality of their performance must be continuously evaluated and should be systematically because at all levels dwell on effective teaching methods and learning processes, basically lecturers are most important resources of universities. The interaction between students and their academic performance has played a vigorous role in their learning process.

Module Content:

Module content also affect on student's performance and students learning. Module content and educational programs must be based on student's academic performance and learning process (Richards, 2007). Schmitt (2000) found that any course outlines or module should be related with real life situations and it should be according to the students and learner needs.

The role of assessment feedback:

By the analyzing (McCann L, 2010) assessment and assessment feedback both plays a vital role in student's academic learning process and it is a main part of teaching and learning strategies, this mean to say that the assessment and the teachers select to put forward the students and this is a way in which teachers give output of students and it has a positive impact on student's academic performance. (McCann L, 2010) further he determined that the role assessment feedback is defined as a information which teachers can give in different ways such as an individually or group work task, through this teachers will be able to see the academic performance of a student's that how good they have done and how much they need of improvement so the main purpose of assessment is to motivate the students.

Teaching Methodology and Teacher's Attributes:

In any university students always closely related with their teachers. This means they are in contact with their teachers, the interaction of students and teachers, teacher's attributes may affect the student's academic performance (Adeyele JS, 2012). According to (Mlambo, 2011) he found that the student's learning way and lecturer's teaching methodology has been verified that there is positive impact on student's academic performance.

Students' Academic Challenges

When students first time enter in the university mostly they take stress and anxiety and they feel insecure and unconfident (Snyders S, 2005). These stressful causes may

affect negative impact on students learning process because entry of new student in university they get new relationships and new atmosphere (Snyders S, 2005).

Purpose of Study/Problem Statement

In public sector universities students are enrolled on the basis of aptitude test/entry test and by adding the cumulative score of their previous exams. Unfortunately there was no fairness found at college level so the students get enrolled easily in university but very difficult to survive efficiently. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate such strategies at college level as students become able to survive in efficient manner in the university and qualify their degrees in flying scores and can easily compete in the job market.

Students' performance in university and passing of subjects pose very serious problems due to students' backgrounds. Thus, this study is designed to measure students' perception on factors that they feel de-motivated towards their academic performance.

The major purpose of this study is to identify and suggest possible solutions to the post enrollment problems faced by students having major influence on their degree completion and better learning.

Research Questions

This study has tried to answer the following research questions:

Q1: How does student learning affected by module content?

Q2: How does feedback/assessment affect students' academic performance?

Q3: How does lecturing style improve students' academic performance?

Q4: What challenges faced by students at campus?

Hypotheses/Themes with In Study Model

H1: There is positive relationship between module content and academic performance.

H2: Assessment feedback plays role in an increase in academic performance.

H3: There is relationship between lecturing style, lecturer attributes and academic performance.

H4: Students' academic challenges stress negatively their academic performance.

Significance of Study

As this study poses to identify the students perception towards academic performance with respect to factors influencing performance. This study has the potential to:

1. Help the students to identify the factors that resist their academic performance.
2. Help students to overcome certain factors for improved performance.
3. Help lecturers and management being known about students' problems and develop strategies to cope with certain problems.

Scope of Study

As this study achieve its purposes by well addressing the research questions and become able to portrait its significance this study will be able to demonstrate its scope for students, teachers, and management to address their issues creating hindrances in academic performance. This study will help students to cope with the academic problems and challenges. This will help teachers to innovate their teaching methodologies to provide quality learning to students in effective manner and also help management to formulate future strategies.

Literature Review

Subject Matter

The subject matter of the study was to focus on the following factors that affect the students' academic performance.

Module content:

The structure of module content and the method of module content also affect the student's academic performance; module content structure should be based on students need (Richards, 2007). Some researchers indicate that if there is theoretical knowledge based module which is related to real life situations through these students enable to understand the related material but if it is related with real life situation it will be easy to understand for students and they will easily find the learnt material (Theall, 2004).

If curriculum will be related with the real life situations it will encourage the students and through these types of curriculums students will able to understand more things this means students will involve in learning process. Students learning process can be develop through problem solving, if courses outline or module content are designed in a way which creates problems so students will try to solve the problem, through this students memory will be sharp and they will able to think rationally (Murray H, 1998).

The role of assessment feedback:

Assessment and assessment feedback both are very important for student's academic performance because through assessment lecturers can give feedback to their students that how they are well in studies and how to improve them; feedback is essential part of teaching and learning process (McCann L, 2010). According to (Ramsden, 1992) he said that there are two functions of assessment to inform the students whether they are successful or not, assessment convey a message to students that where they

are and how much they have to improve and which things they have to learn.

Feedback also plays a vigorous role in students learning process, by the deterring (Luckett K, 2000) through assessment, feedback can be given to students in order to motivate the students, in order to help them and suggest them that how and which things you have to learn.

In the viewpoint of (Taras, 2002) feedback is very essential for students, but it is effective for students until unless they do not understand that what the assessment was about and unless they are not going to change their future. Assessment feedback will be most effective if it is relevant to the study, meaningful and timely, through assessment feedback student can able to understand, if there are suggestions for students that how students should improve. The best time to give feedback to their students that should be one or two days (Race, 2002).

Teaching Methodology and Teacher's attributes:

There is positive relationship between students and teachers because according to (Mlambo, 2011) he said that the teaching way of teachers and students learning attributes has been proven that there is positive impact on student's performance. Teaching methodology affects the students learning process because it matters for students that how teachers are delivering their lecturers and how is their teaching methodology (Adeyele JS, 2012).

In the viewpoint of Shah (2009), he analyzed that the relationship of students and teachers plays a vital role in learning process because students cannot perform well until unless they are not getting respect from their teachers or until they do not take full attention. Students always feel more comfortable when they are in touch with their teachers. In universities students are excited when they are attending their classes or lectures are uninteresting but it depends on teachers that how they are presenting their lectures

interestingly, if teachers bring an active learning approach and active learning teaching methodologies through these students can be motivated towards studies (Clay T, 2006).

The relationship between students and assignments has a positive impact on student's academic performance (Schwerdt G, 2008). Teachers can assess the students through different assignments such as individually assignments, group assignments, projects and portfolios and it is closely related with student's academic performance and these assessment tests are very useful for students learning process (Schwerdt G, 2008).

The most important observation about teachers and students is the teaching way of teachers and learning process of students should be conducted as students feel confident and able to ask any question or discuss something relating to study. This makes sure those students from teachers and teachers from students they both learn from each other (Lee HJ, 2009).

Students' Academic Challenges

In universities when first time students enter they feel stress and tension and they feel that they are not secure (Snyders S, 2005). If students take stress and tension due to these causes this situation affects on student's academic performance, in new environment students build many new relations through these relationships students can fulfill their requirements and can get success (Snyders S, 2005).

According to McCombs BL (2007) student's learning process is related with social interactions and communication. At university level if student's relationships are good with their teachers they feel comfortable and students feel that their academic work is perfect and meaningful and it has a positive impact on student's academic performance and learning process, but if student's relationships are not good with their teachers they feel negative perception and they feel that their work is not meaningful, students feel that they

are not helping to achieve the educational goal (McCombs BL, 2007).

In the viewpoint of Cukras (2006) university students always face many problems and challenges like they confuse to understand the given task and assignment and how to select study strategies for interpreting and reviewing the given tasks. Cukras (2006) further analyze that university students should establish various strategies which are related with study purpose. As student are very busy in their work and assignment so they must develop study strategies how that they can specifically utilize to meet the particular demands about the learning material.

Relevance of study

The subject matter is purely related with area of interest of the researcher. As the researcher is teacher at Dadu campus it will also help the researcher in professional setting to provide innovated teaching in future. It will help researcher to better understand the mind set of students' about teachers, campus, and also provide an opportunity to make deep concern about service delivery at campus.

Research methodology

Philosophical Assumption

An inductive philosophical assumption applied in the study.

Type of research

The explanatory type of research is applied in this study to explain the factors determining the students' academic performance on the basis of module contents, assessment feedback, teaching methodology, teacher's attributes and academic challenges faced by students.

Research method

This study has advocated the qualitative research method for examining the factors affecting academic performance.

Instrument/tool

The interview guide was used to collect the data from the final year students of Department of Business Administration, English and Information Technology Sindh University Campus Dadu. Interview guide was comprised of demographic information and study related questions divided into four categories: Module Content consists of five questions, assessment consists of four questions, Teacher's attributes consists of three questions and Students' Academic Challenges comprised of four questions respectively.

Sample/ unit of analysis

The sample unit of study was the final year students of three departments. Students were divided into three groups: Department of Business Administration group included four students (two from BBA-Final and two from MBA Final Year), English department group included two students from BS Final year, and two students from BS (IT) final year were interviewed. Interviews were recorded in audio shape then transcribed by the researcher.

Research techniques

The transcribed interviews were analyzed through content analysis. The transcriptions were coded, word query was run to categories into patterns that emerged as themes.

Results & Discussions

Results Images & Theoretical Discussion

The following are categories on which analysis of raw data was based, and themes that subsequently emerged from the analysis.

“Category 1: Module Content”

On the basis of comments shared by students on asking about the module content/syllabus taught to them they shared the module content into three categories as Module Structure, Interesting/less interesting modules, and availability of reference books.

Module Structure

The participants shown their consent as the almost module taught to them is according to HEC criteria and also covering the job market needs. But the module is not structured in proper manner as in some semesters 3 subjects are taught and in some 5 or 6 subjects means structure of syllabus has not uniformity and on the other hand the syllabus design is not in coherent manner.

Interesting/ Less Interesting Modules

The participants said that it depends on nature of subject as well as the teaching methodology a teacher is using while lecturing. Some of subjects are very interesting like operations management, simulation etc. Such type of interpreting subjects helps them to think critically and help them to use brainstorming. The interested way of teaching also helped them to be more altitudinous than traditionally learning. Though some subjects were found less interesting because of subject outlines and sometime because of teachers capabilities, some teachers' way of teaching do not match with the subjects' structure.

Some participants' direct quotations are: *"Some assignments are not clear. You do not know what you are expected to do"*.

Reference Books Availability

Participants pointed out that the only teachers of business administration department refer the text books while others only provide handouts in the shape of slides. While the reference books are available in the library and latest books were taught to them.

Category 2: Assessment

In this category only provision of feedback was emerged as theme. The students were asked about time of feedback, feedback system, and result announcement procedure.

Provision of Feedback

The students commented that there is somewhat provision to provide feedback to the students in the shape of returning

assignments to students, midterm results or anything else midterm copies checked within a week and this helped us to improve our performance for the final paper.

Category 3: Teaching Methodology/Teacher's Attributes

In these category teachers' teaching methodology and teacher's attributes as teacher's favoritism found as emerged themes.

Teaching Methodology

Students indicated that some teachers teach traditionally by using board and marker but some are teaching them through audio visual aids by using multimedia in the shape of slides. Teachers teach them politely and in an easy understanding manner.

Teacher's Favoritism

Students pointed out that some teachers appear to give favor to the special group of students or their relatives but not yet any gender favoritism found in campus. Some teachers prefer to negotiate with those students who gets higher marks in assignments and tests or with those who interact with teachers outside campus as well.

Category 4: Students' Academic Challenges

The participants' responses have enabled researcher to emerge the themes like Language Problems, Time management and academic writing.

Language Problem

Majority of the students are facing language problem because English is not our mother tongue and not also our basic language. As mostly students enrolled in campus had passed their last exams from public sector schools and colleges being taught in Sindhi Urdu language so their base is not sufficient strong to face the language competency at graduate level studies. Though teachers also don't help students to get rid of such type of problems.

Time Management

According to students' large population of the campus come from villages and nearby towns about 20 to 25 km far from Dadu city. Due to delay in reaching and leaving the campus and some other issues like electricity short falls in villages they could not be able to compete or can get much benefit from campus facilities like library, lab etc.

Writing Skills

Participants said that students in the school have not yet grasped academic writing skills. Students told that very limited experienced faculty members are hired in departments and majority is teaching assistants and visiting faculty members who they unable to help the students to improve their academic skills.

Discussions

The students' comments in Category 1 Module content shown deep concern about the structure of the syllabus though the syllabus is about the criteria of Higher Education Commission (HEC) but the allocation of subjects into semester wise break up is not in proper manner. It is also important to note that the subjects should be allocated in semesters in sequence like in Department of Business Administration subjects should be allocated as at first sight students study financial management subject before selecting the finance specialization field. It is also required to include the subjects and contents that would address the real life issues of the students.

Module content should be according to market needs, it would cover the practical aspects of the real life (Maphosa et al. 2014a).

The major flaw of less interesting subject found among students mind is the subjects are lacking the challenging, less practical and yet had not applied by the students practically. Students indicated that the teachers should be directed to refer the books of subjects they are teaching and make availability of such books in campus seminar library. Seminar

library not only enriched with text books but also with magazines, newsletter and research journals as well. Such an abundance of shortage of academic resources cause negative perception of students towards academic performance.

On category 2 Assessment feedback the students have shown their deep concern about the assessment procedure. Students found dissatisfied from not to provide feedback properly and timely. It seems to be mostly teachers don't assess the students scripts, assignments just declare the result at their own will and wish, due to this so many vague questions arise in the mind of students.

According to Luckett and Sutherland (2000), timely provision of feedback can motivate the students to improve their learning and competing abilities. Students pointed out either the feedback not given if given on demand it is not timely.

In category 3 Teaching Methodology and Teacher's Attributes students pointed out that the teachers' teaching methodology not ruin in uniform direction some time they use digital way of teaching by using multimedia some time they use traditional method of teaching. On the other hand the teachers are highly qualified and very much experienced, they possess such qualities to motivate the students towards academic excellence and having ability to clear all the queries generated in students mind.

While talking about lecturers' attributes few teachers have habit of favoring students specially visiting faculty members or those teachers who are from Dadu as native town though majority of the faculty of the campus from outside of the Dadu city. There is need to uniform the policy that the teachers should focus all the students equally rather than favoring certain group of students who interact with them and offer anything to them. Favoritism is not good for the future of the students at all. Students expressed their views in thanking manner that there is no gender favoritism found in the campus because mostly male students show deep

concern that the female students awarded high marks, high prestige because of their gender.

In category 4 Academic Challenges students pointed out the language problems, time management and academic writing. The students shown their consent that they face language problems at university level because their base is not much strong to adopt the foreign language English as their mode of learning. They also worried about the time management that because of large distance between their homes and campus they could not able to get much benefit from campus facilities as well as manage their life according to demands of their degree programs. As so far, academic writing skills they also shown frustrated that because of above language and time management problems they are unable to compete in academic writing.

Conclusions & Suggestions

Conclusions

On the basis of participants responses the conclusion has been articulated that the syllabus taught to the students possess much importance in students' motivation and academic performance. While preparing the lesson plans or lectures the teachers should keep in mind the students as audience and their understanding as ultimate destination to achieve the desired teaching and learning objectives. It has been also observed that the students intentions to learn a lot depends on the learning and teaching resources as availability of books, literature, journals, reports access to digital library etc. It is found that the campus lacks certain resources to empower the students with market based and advanced learning opportunities.

In addition to this feedback system has got much importance to impact the students' academic performance. Although the marks break up is well designed though not followed in proper manner. As the students show enthusiasm to seek

feedback for self assessment and make themselves capable to meet the future challenges. As the previous research studies have also highlighted the importance of feedback system in academic achievement thus study has also revealed that if the feedback system implemented properly will be very much helpful for students to improve their academic performance. The research has also tried at best level to highlight the issues concerned to teachers' behavior with students. Sometimes it was observed that the teachers were failed to maintain the positive relations with students because of their harsh behavior that directly affected the students' academic performance. Students felt very neglecting behavior while consulting with teachers in some cases.

In last but not least students are also facing academic challenges that need further investigation and proper solutions. University administration also deprived of intake of students with poor backgrounds. They got higher grades either by cheating or by paying bribe to educational boards. The Government colleges were also not enriched with modern teaching aids and other academic resources as they become failure to produce productive inputs for universities. It would, therefore, be appropriate to implement, for example, academic writing skills programs for first year students.

Suggestions

The study has recommended certain suggestions for improving academic performance on the basis of findings of the study.

- There should be training programs for the faculty members especially very fresh hiring of Teaching Assistants and Visiting Faculty members with the collaboration of Higher Authorities.
- A uniform policy should be introduced and implemented about the assessment feedback

system. Timely announcement of results should be the main focus of the assessment feedback system.

- Moreover, campus should arrange such type of workshops, seminars to improve academic writing skills of the campus.
- A well developed monitoring system should be developed and implemented to evaluate the students' performance as well as teachers' performance.
- Module contents should be balanced as theory and practice especially in the field of business administration and information technology.
- Job fairs should be arranged by collaborating with the corporate sector.
- In addition, campus management should take necessary measures to remove students' grievances.

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Interview Guide

**INTERVIEW GUIDE OF EXAMINING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SINDH UNIVERSITY DADU CAMPUS.**

Demographic Information

How are you?

In which class are you?

From which department you are?

How do you look this campus in your city?

What's your perception about this campus?

Are you satisfied by studying in this campus?

Category 1: Module Content

Q1: How Syllabus structured and taught to you?

Q2: Do you think the syllabus taught to you is interesting, challenging and having practical implications?

Q3: Will you please tell something about syllabus? Interested/motivated/boring etc.

Q4: Do the teachers refer books about subjects being taught?

Q5: Are the text books and reference books available in your campus seminar library?

Category 2: Assessment

Q1: How do you get feedback from teachers?

Q2: Do the teachers announce the result in class or on notice board?

Q3: Would you like to tell about timing of feedback?

Q4: How much you are satisfied with teachers' feedback procedure?

Category 3: Lecturer Attributes

Q1: When you have problem with subject content then how you consult with subject teacher? Please explain by mentioning any practical example of your academic life?

Q2: What is the attitude of teachers in class and out of class with students?

Q3: Is there any gender, race or any other favoritism?

Category 4: Student's Academic Challenges

Q1: What is mode of teaching?

Q2: Do you face any language problem in lecture?

Q3: Are the teachers punctual to conduct classes?

Q4: Are the teachers council for improving academic writing skills?

Finally, would you like to contrast the present and past of this campus and would you like to suggest about future?