

Academic Success Factors: Implications for Teaching, Learning and Academic Administration

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ABSTRACT A group of second year students in a university of technology was asked to provide their perceptions of the main factors that contribute to their academic success and or failure. This exploratory study used the survey method to gather data from a convenient sample of the target population, which consisted of second year students offering Financial Management. This study undoubtedly has value because if the success and failure factors are identified and reconciled, students are likely to adjust their behaviour to produce positive outcomes. Beyond this, it must be acknowledged that entrepreneurship has been considered as one of the ways to boost the economy of any nation. Therefore, finding ways of attracting and retaining students on the program will improve access to entrepreneurship education as well as fast track economic development once graduates are able to add value to their respective communities.

INTRODUCTION

This study was inspired by the experience of one of the authors of this paper during an investigation into the challenges that university students face in a three-year Diploma program. This was in 2012. That study found among others, that only an approximate forty five per cent of the 150 students who registered in 2010 successfully completed the program at the end of the 2012 academic session. This meant that the number of 2010 student cohort significantly decreased every successive year. A significant decrease in student cohort every successive year is in fact not something new. Zulu (2008), and Steenkamp and Baard (2009) noted that only a few percentage of students complete their studies within the minimum duration. Also, several previous studies (Killen and Fraser 2002; Fraser and Killen 2003, 2005; Killen et al. 2003; Sadler and Erasmus 2005; Steenkamp and Baard 2009; Roos 2009) on academic performance factors in South Africa commented similarly. This is also a common occurrence around the world (AL-Mu-

tairi 2011) as many students spend approximately 3.5 years to complete a three year qualification (Peat and Hewitt 1998).

The focus of this study is to specifically identify factors that contribute to academic success or failure of students of Entrepreneurship and Business Management at a University of Technology (UoT) in South Africa. Therefore, the main research question was: specifically, what factors are responsible for student success and or failure in this programme? In particular, second year students offering Financial Management (a major subject in this program) were the target population. This study undoubtedly has value because if these factors are identified and reconciled, students' success rates are more likely to increase (Killen and Fraser 2002). From this current study, it is likely for university administrators to gather basic information which can then be utilised for introducing effective strategies to reduce failure and subsequently increase chances of success. Morgan (2001: 234) states that such information "provide both academic and support staff with information to assist [in] intervention with students where appropriate". Therefore, a need to identify these factors and avail them to both students and lecturers would possibly bring a positive outcome towards students' performance. Beyond this, it must be acknowledged that given the need for better economic development and growth of any economy, one of the

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key roles that universities have to play is to develop an entrepreneurial mindset among its students through entrepreneurship education. Therefore, an enabling environment which can aid the entrepreneurial mindset is what we regard as the perfect platform to think and act holistically while pursuing opportunities with the major purpose of adding value to a community.

According to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (CHE 2010), South Africa needs more higher education graduates who can function in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent economy and society. And as Bokana and Tewari (2014) warned, high dropout and failure rates as well as slow progression of students will impede South Africa's aspiration if the trend of high dropout and failure rates at South African universities is not curtailed.

Studies of this nature are therefore conducted and used for various purposes namely (1) to generate an understanding of and insight into a particular instance by providing a rich description of the case and illuminating its relations to broader contexts; (2) to explore a general problem or issue within a limited and focused setting; (3) to generate theoretical insights, either in the form of grounded theory that can be used to develop and test an existing theory with reference to the case; and (4) to shed light on other, similar cases, thus providing a level of generalisation or transferability (Rule and John 2011: 7).

Previous studies (Anthony 1997, 2000; Glass et al. 1997; Peat and Hewitt 1998; Fraser and Killen 2003; Zulu 2008) on factors that influence academic success or failure focused on the first years. A major critique of those studies is that first years do not possess reasonable capacity to understand the meaning of 'success' and 'failure' (Zhang and Aasheim 2011: 326). Considering that some institutions have one year length modules on their courses, claims that first years might have inadequate experience to define 'success' and 'failure' until they are in their second year are justified. Students proceed to their second year after passing their first year modules. Major subjects (compulsory) have to be passed for a student to proceed to second year; otherwise, the student would be required to repeat the specific failed module. It is on this basis that this study is unique as second year students are considered to have a better understanding of the contextual meaning of the terms 'success' and 'failure' as presented below.

Literature Review

Defining Academic Success and Failure

Several definitions have been presented for the terms academic success and failure. Zhang and Aasheim (2011) are of the opinion that definitions for these terms must be specific to the population; given their peculiar environment. Harding (2012) argues that academic success can signify 'achieving a 75% in a course and passing an accompanying clinical component'. The Diploma in Entrepreneurship is a 3-year program. The rule is that each student must obtain a minimum mark of fifty percent to pass a subject. Also, given that there are compulsory subjects that enable progression to a higher level, it is expected that a student must obtain the minimum mark of fifty percent in all those subjects' assessments as well as other subjects. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, 'success' refers to:

- i. The ability to graduate within the minimum duration of the Diploma in Entrepreneurship at a UoT; and
- ii. The ability to obtain at least a fifty percent mark in all assessments (formative or summative).

However, the term "failure" refers to:

- i. The inability to graduate within the minimum duration of the Diploma in Entrepreneurship at a UoT; and
- ii. Obtaining less than fifty percent mark in all assessments (formative or summative). This will result in the student repeating some of the subjects for the whole year or dropping out of the system before completion.

Factors Responsible for Academic Failure and Success

Literature reviewed by Killen et al. (2003: 148) suggest that students' approach to learning seem to be strongly influenced by what will enhance their chances of success or diminish their chances of failure even when the perceptions are misguided. Similarly, Killen (1994) indicated that lecturers' perceptions of the factors that contribute to student success appear to influence their approach to teaching and their relationship with students.

Wimshurst et al. (2006) state that a body of literature on students' failure at universities was difficult to identify especially in researches between 1970 and 1980. This was attributed to something of an embarrassment to the institutions hence some of such researches were incorporated under the broader umbrella of attrition/retention research. Tinto (1987) also indicated similarly. Currently, the literature on failure factors is mostly identified together with success factors under students' academic performance literature. This has been indicated by AL-Mutairi (2011: 147) who presents studies undertaken in various parts of Kuwait. Other studies (Anthony 1997, 2000; Killen and Fraser 2002; Fraser and Killen 2003, 2005; Killen et al. 2003; Sadler and Erasmus 2005; Steenkamp and Baard 2009; Roos 2009) also attest to this.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study is situated within Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977). The framework suggests that one's source of motivation is linked to self-evaluative reactions, that is, anticipated satisfaction of desired accomplishments and the negative appraisals of insufficient performance thus provide incentives for action. This framework has been applied by various researchers in several disciplines including educational psychology and organisational development (Martin and Dowson 2009; Nilsen 2009). Self-efficacy refers to "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura 1977: 193). Utilising this theory, this study prompted the students to reflect on their behaviours against the identified set of factors to achieve a desired outcome. Bandura also asserts that motivation is primarily concerned with activation and consistency of behaviour. For instance, if factors that influence success and failure are identified and available to students, students are more likely to modify their behaviour to produce a positive outcome. An example is illustrated in the following scenario. If students are aware that attendance at lecture is the most influential failure factor, students would adjust by improving on their attendance. Nilsen (2009: 547) also claims that students will be more positive about studies if they believe they can succeed and will avoid or reduce energy if they believe they will

not succeed. This claim is consistent with Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory (Vroom 1964). Expectancy theory is associated with the philosophy that people are motivated when they believe that they are able to accomplish a task for which they will get a reward and the reward will be worthy of the effort required (Valdez and Nichols 2013). While Bandura's framework speaks about the successful execution of a behaviour that produces the necessary outcome, Vroom's theory insists that behaviour can be initiated, directed and sustained (Amos et al. 2008). This essentially means that both student and lecturer need to be aware of the factors that motivate and militate against the success of a student. Once the factors influencing academic performance are identified, students put in more effort in their studies to achieve academic success. However, students are more likely to pay little attention to an identified factor if they are aware that it has low influence in academic success. This study will utilise these frameworks in explaining some of the findings.

METHODOLOGY

Method

The purpose of this study was to obtain qualitative data which would enable the identification of the most important factors that students perceive as influencing academic success and failure. Accordingly, the study gathered data using two open-ended questions in which participants were asked to specifically state five factors which they perceive as influential in academic performance in terms of (a) success and (b) failure. The questions were validated using Killen's 1994 study. Killen asked his sample to list the five factors that they thought were most important in contributing to their success and failure at university. Other studies (Fraser and Killen 2003, 2005; Zulu 2008; Zhang and Aasheim 2011) had also adopted Killen's study in pursuing similar studies in different contexts.

This study adopted an almost similar set of questions. The questions were (1) specifically, which five factors do you think are most important in contributing to student success in Entrepreneurship Diploma program at this UoT?, and (2) specifically, which five factors do you think are most likely to lead to student failure in Entrepreneurship Diploma program at this UoT?

Target Population

The Diploma in Entrepreneurship is a three-year programme that has two major subjects namely Financial Management and Small Business Management at the UoT where this study was conducted. In order to graduate within the stipulated duration, a student must pass all the major subjects (Lancia et al. 2013). This was the basis for choosing students who were registered for the subject - Financial Management as the population because it is one of the major subjects hence failing it would mean not graduating within the stipulated duration of three years. Another justification for the population was the contextual definitions of 'success' and 'failure' in this study. Zhang and Aasheim (2011: 317) posit that 'upper division students have the academic experience to recognise the factors that contribute to their academic success or failure'.

In order to improve response rate, the questionnaire was distributed to the population during a Financial Management lecture. However, only forty-six useful questionnaires were returned out of eighty-nine students present in class. This means that fifty two per cent of the population participated in the study. This number is considered sufficient to reflect all the characteristics of the population (Brynard and Hanekom 2006; Sekaran 2000).

This study has merit especially on the unique grounds that it focused on second year students of Entrepreneurship and Business Management in a South African UoT. Previous studies on student success factors focused on traditional and comprehensive universities in South Africa.

Ethical Considerations

This study observed research ethics protocols. Firstly, the researchers obtained ethical clearance from the UoT's Ethics Review Board. A meeting was subsequently held between the researchers and the Financial Management lecturer. The goal of the meeting was to inform the lecturer about the study and to obtain his consent. The lecturer then suggested dates for the researchers to visit his class and inform the students about the study. Essentially, these protocols were observed with the intention of obtaining informed consent both from the lecturer and the population. According to Mack et al. (2005), informed consent is one of the most important

tools for ensuring that participants understand what it means to participate in a particular research so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate manner whether they want to be part of the research or not.

RESULTS

The responses were analysed by firstly sorting them into discrete categories or factors and tallying. 38 factors were identified as important in academic success and 41 were identified as important in academic failure. These factors were identified in consultation with similar researches (Killen 1994; Anthony 1997, 2000; Ditcher and Tetley 1999; Killen and Fraser 2002; Killen et al. 2003; Fraser and Killen 2003, 2005; Zulu 2008; Zhang and Aasheim 2011). It was noted that factors fell into eight broad groupings with regard to what they are related to: lecturer and personal; person-related; lecturer-related; resources-related; personal and external; personal and socio-economic; related to curriculum; and environment related factors. All the success factors fell into six of the eight (above) identified groupings with the two in which no factor fell into being environment and the personal and socio-economic categories. Only the curriculum-related factors category was not identified with any of the failure factors. An analysis of the data with the use of Excel was applied leading to a set of factors influencing (a) success and (b) failure at the university.

Tables 1 and 2 present the success and failure factors respectively ranked according to the frequencies from the highest to the lowest.

The finding reveals that twenty of the thirty eight factors (that is, 53%) perceived to be influential in success were person-related (See Table 3). This is followed by the lecturer-related category with ten factors. When frequency is taken into consideration, the person-related category remains at the top with sixty-six per cent of the responses followed by both the lecturer-related and resource-related both claiming thirteen per cent of the responses.

Table 4 presents the failure factors identified. Twenty-two of the forty-one factors (that is, 50%) are person-related. Considering the frequency, person-related factors account for sixty three per cent followed by ten per cent for resource-related.

Table 1: Responses on success factors

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	Regular study	11.54
2	Regular attendance at lecture	9.13
3	Tutorials	8.17
4	Hardworking, commitment and dedication	6.73
5	Assignment completion and submission	5.29
6	Clear presentations by lecturers	4.33
7	Ability to understand in-depth content of subjects	4.33
8	Timely and regular examination preparation	3.85
9	Lecturer availability for consultation	3.37
10	External motivation (from friends, family and lecturers, guest speakers)	3.37
11	Self-discipline	2.88
12	Paying enough attention at lectures	2.88
13	Supportive and approachable lecturers	2.40
14	Ability to work in group activities	2.40
15	Dedication to the dream of owning a qualification	2.40
16	Effective time management and organisational skills	2.40
17	Use of library resources	2.40
18	Effective study methods (individual and group)	1.92
19	Aligning theory and practice	1.92
20	Self-motivation to become successful in life	1.92
21	Having own resources, for example, text books	1.92
22	Practical relevant content	1.44
23	Motivated lecturers	1.44
24	Lecturers' attendance to lectures	1.44
25	Self-confidence to make presentations in class	1.44
26	Quiet and comfortable lecture rooms	1.44
27	Ability to work independently	0.96
28	Reading beyond prescribed material	0.96
29	Awareness of the available support services e.g. tutors, libraries	0.96
30	Regular and comprehensive feedback on progress from lecturers	0.48
31	Lecturers giving more time in lectures	0.48
32	Information if class is cancelled	0.48
33	Easy access of lecturers' notes and slides via blackboard learning	0.48
34	Assignments given by all lecturers at the same time	0.48
35	Lecturers to communicate exam dates allowing time for preparation	0.48
36	Having a positive attitude towards university education	0.48
37	Good writing skills	0.48
38	Financial support, for example, from family	0.48
	Total	100.00

DISCUSSION

Comparison by Factor Categorisation

Six of the top ten factors in both success and failure list account for person-related factors as shown in Table 5. This implies that success or failure is mostly influenced by what students do to impact their studies. In other words, students have greater control towards their success or failure. This is also supported on the ranking of the success and failure factors list based on categories in Tables 3 and 4 in which person-related factors ranked the top. This supports the findings by Killen (1994) in which nine of the ten most influential student success fac-

tors and six of the ten most influential student failure factors were within their control.

Individual Factor Rankings

This study has identified 'regular study' (11.54%) and the 'lack of attendance at lectures' (11.88%) as the most influential in student academic success and failure respectively. This study shows similar results on the top two ranked factors as part of the findings in Zhang and Aasheim (2011: 317). Regular study and 'attend class' were ranked first and second respectively in influencing academic success. However, the top ranking factors were not significant in a study conducted by Ditcher and Tetley (1999).

Table 2: Responses on the failure factors

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	Lack of attendance at lectures	11.88
2	Heavy course workload	6.44
3	Lack of self-discipline	6.44
4	Insufficient effort – studying	6.44
5	Not paying enough attention at lectures	5.94
6	Failure to reach the depth of understanding required at tertiary level	4.95
7	Lack of communication between students and lecturers	4.46
8	Unstable social challenges, for example, crime, poverty	4.46
9	Not finishing or doing assignments	3.96
10	Personal problems, for example, financial problem, resources	3.96
11	Lack of tutors and tutorials	3.47
12	Poor time management and organisational skills	2.97
13	Failure to approach lecturers or tutors	2.97
14	Boring presentations by lecturers	2.48
15	Lack of external motivation (from friends, family and lecturers, guest speakers)	2.48
16	Lack of dedication and commitment	2.48
17	Laziness	2.48
18	Viewing group activities as challenging	1.98
19	Lack of self-motivation	1.98
20	Lack of participation in group activities	1.49
21	Low self esteem	1.49
22	Lack of interest in the course	1.49
23	Noisy lecturing environment	1.49
24	Language challenges	0.99
25	Inability to manage stress	0.99
26	Little usage of the library	0.99
27	Poor examination preparation	0.99
28	Lack of self-confidence	0.99
29	Lack of resources e.g. textbooks and computer at home	0.99
30	Lack of alignment between practice and theory	0.50
31	Not given the opportunity to explore own business ideas	0.50
32	Realising one is doing a wrong course	0.50
33	Too many demands on student's time	0.50
34	Lecturers with unrealistically high expectations from students	0.50
35	Upfront cash payments by tutors from students	0.50
36	Part-time jobs by students to raise money for fees and books	0.50
37	Studying only to pass exams	0.50
38	Poor writing skills	0.50
39	Poor first year foundation	0.50
40	Negative attitude towards studies	0.50
41	Lack of access to university facilities e.g. internet	0.50
	Total	100.00

Table 3: Frequency of categorised factors

<i>Category</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Person-related	20	138	66
Lecturer-related	10	26	13
Resource-related	5	27	13
Curriculum	1	3	1
Lecturer and personal	1	7	3
Personal and external	1	7	3
Total	38	208	100

Tutorials were also ranked significantly towards student success. A suggestion could be that students are willing to create additional study

time by attending tutorial in study areas they struggle with. This has been indicated in factors

Table 4: Frequency of categorised factors

<i>Category</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Person-related	22	127	63
Resource-related	5	21	10
Curriculum-related	4	16	8
Lecturer-related	3	7	3
Personal and socio-economic	3	12	6
Environment	2	5	2
Lecturer and personal	1	9	4
Personal and external	1	5	2
Total	41	202	100

Table 5: Top ten success and failure factors

<i>Success Characteristics</i>		<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Regular study	Person-related	24	11.54
2	Regular attendance at lecture	Person-related	19	9.13
3	Tutorials	Resource-related	17	8.17
4	Hardworking, commitment and dedication	Person-related	14	6.73
5	Assignment completion and submission	Person-related	11	5.29
6	Clear presentations by lecturers	Lecturer-related	9	4.33
7	Ability to understand in-depth content of subjects	Person-related	9	4.33
8	Timely and regular examination preparation	Person-related	8	3.85
9	Lecturer availability for consultation	Lecturer and personal	7	3.37
10	External motivation (from friends, family and lecturers, guest speakers)	Personal and external	7	3.37

<i>Failure</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
1	Lack of attendance at lectures	Person-related	24	11.88
2	Heavy course workload	Curriculum-related	13	6.44
3	Lack of self-discipline	Person-related	13	6.44
4	Insufficient effort – studying	Person-related	13	6.44
5	Not paying enough attention at lectures	Person-related	12	5.94
6	Failure to reach the depth of understanding required at tertiary level	Person-related	10	4.95
7	Lack of communication between students and lecturers	Lecturer and personal	9	4.46
8	Unstable social challenges, for example, crime, poverty	Personal and socio-economic	9	4.46
9	Not finishing or doing assignments	Person-related	8	3.96
10	Personal problems, for example, financial problem, resources	Resource-related	8	3.96

such as heavy workload; clear presentation by lecturers; and the ability to understand in-depth content of subjects. Discussions of the peculiarities of these findings now follow.

Attending Lectures

Certain student behaviours (not attending class, not taking notes, not reading notes) ensure failure, yet some behaviour such as attending lectures, taking notes during lecture, and reading improve the chances of success (Schmelzer et al. 1987). Our findings support these findings. Zulu (2008: 37) ranked attendance as the most success influencing factor in her study. Results of our study on the success factors are identical with the findings of Zhang and Aasheim (2011: 317) on the first two factors (regular study and regular attendance at lecture). On the failure factors in our study, lack of attendance at lecture ranked first supporting the findings of Zhang and Aasheim also.

It should be noted that attendance at lecturers requires the lecturer to attend as well. Doll-

inger et al. (2008: 884) emphasised the importance of regular attendance towards achieving success. Steenkamp et al. (2009) on a study that focused on Financial Accounting students had findings that support this study in which class attendance was identified to be highly influential in student success. Crede et al. (2010) in their study indicated that class attendance was of great importance towards student success. There is some association to Vroom's theory here: motivation on the part of the student to perform is also linked to the expectation that with a lecturer present, the student is very likely to benefit from further enquiry on the topics discussed.

Regular Study

Regular study ranked as the top success influencing factor. This confirms the findings of Fraser and Killen (2003) and Steenkamp (2012). Dollinger et al. (2008: 884) indicated the importance of consistency study towards students' success. Contrary to such findings, Zulu (2008:

37) also found that regular study was not regarded as the most important factor towards student success.

Tutorials

Students identified tutorials as impacting their success in this study. This confirms the findings of Zulu (2008: 37) and Anthony (1997: 63-64). There are studies though, which contradict our findings. These include Killen et al. (2003), Fraser and Killen (2005), and Zhang and Aasheim (2011). Ditcher and Tetley (1999) who indicated learning support programs such as tutorials also found that tutorials were of less importance in student success/failure. This shows how factors vary among various studies. Tutorials are mostly attended by students who need to catch up with the content or topic already covered in an initial lecture. Bandura's model has some significance here in the sense that behavior is modified in order to produce outcomes that are beneficial to the student. Therefore, the researchers are of the opinion that if students see the benefit of tutorials, they are likely to attend. Beyond this though, it is advised that students must also pursue independent study to compliment the lessons they get through tutorials.

Student Effort and Self-discipline

Efforts by students towards their studies seem to be significant towards student success. Our findings confirm the results of earlier researches such as Schmelzer et al. (1987); Fraser and Killen (2003: 257-258); and the findings from Fraser and Killen (2005: 30-31). Reference is also made to Bandura's study in this regard. The assumption is that if students perceive that they are able to accomplish a task, they are persuaded and disciplined enough to direct their effort towards the task. A study by Schmelzer et al. (1987) on college students found that students' persistence and active study were perceived as most influential in their success. On the other hand, effort was not rendered as important in influencing student success by Ditcher and Tetley (1999). The researchers' findings indicate that self-discipline is of major importance in academic performance. Students put in effort in various ways such as the time they spend studying (self-study); attendance; commitment and dedication;

assignment completion and submission. Most of these factors have been indicated as having a significant effect on student academic performance in this study.

Self-motivation

Self motivation was identified among the prominent influential factors towards success as found by Anthony (1997), Ditcher and Tetley (1999), Fraser and Killen (2003: 257-258), as well by Fraser and Killen (2005: 30-31). However, this study has a different finding from the above as self-motivation was far away from the top ranking factors which influence academic success or failure. Similar findings were presented in a study by Zulu (2008: 37) in which self-motivation was not significant towards student success/failure. This is an interesting finding in our opinion because it extends the positions of Zhang and Aasheim (2011) as well as Harding (2012) that academic success and failure factors are not static; they are environment dependent. This can also be linked to Vroom's (1964) framework which suggests a process of cognitive variables that reflects individual differences in terms of motivation (Lunenburg 2011). In short, one's self-motivational abilities can be quite low in a given environment but quite low in another. Therefore, it may help for faculties and departments to identify likely factors that may impede the aspiration to study.

Locus of Control

Fraser and Killen (2003: 260) cited Mischel (1973) who indicated that students should have an effective 'self-regulatory systems and plans'. This perhaps means that students should be able to influence their success. This is supported by our study which identified twenty person-related factors out of the thirty-eight identified success influencing factors. Also, twenty two of the forty-two identified failure influencing factors are person-related. This amounts to person-related factors having slightly above fifty percent of the identified success and failure influencing factors. Again, more than fifty percent (out of 38) of the least success influential factors are those in which students have less control over such as factors relating to lecturers and resources. Contrary to these findings, students have the tendency of blaming their suc-

cess or failure on their lecturers. A testimony of this is the research by Schmelzer et al. (1987).

Basically, the findings in this study reveal that students are able to influence their success if the proper study environment is in place. Therefore program design should take into consideration the need to create awareness of self-efficacy. Motivational talks by industry leaders, entrepreneurs, site visits, and peer champions can be introduced into the curricula. This would instill a culture in which students develop a better understanding of what they can achieve. It can therefore be stated that the success of students lies in their hands hence programs such as tutorials and formative assessments that constantly engage them in their studies would contribute immensely towards their performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING AND ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

Some of the results above present major academic administration, and teaching and learning implications for institutions of higher learning in South Africa, perhaps specifically, universities of technology. For instance, considering that regular study and poor attendance at lectures were perceived by the sample as factors that could lead to their success and or failure, it behoves the UoT in question to equip their classrooms and libraries with infrastructure that enable independent study. Such infrastructure may include functional Wi-Fi networks and e-resources for assignments.

In terms of tutorials, the UoT in question may want to implement an effective tutorial system that encourages students not only to attend, but also to meaningfully engage the tutors. For instance, tutors may not only be chosen on the basis of their academic record, but perhaps on their ability to facilitate tutorials. Also tutors will need to receive regular training to enhance their facilitation and classroom management skills. This can assist them in interacting better with students during tutorials. Tutors may also be recruited from the postgraduate student body.

Clear presentation by lecturers was also implicated as a likely factor to enhance or negatively impact teaching and learning. The implication here is that articulation, good communication competency should form part of the strin-

gent process of recruitment and selection in institutions of higher learning. If a lecturer is perceived to be boring and uninspiring, students may consider his lectures as a waste of time and therefore may not attend his lectures. Another aspect that has serious implications for teaching and learning is that of lecturer availability for consultation. A major discussion lately among academics in South Africa is the issue of workloads. There is a certain feeling by academics that they are overloaded with teaching periods to the extent that they are unable to meet students when needed. Perhaps, this UoT in question may want to look into this so as to 'free up' lecturers' schedule to enable them consult with students when needed and effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study specifically set out to identify factors that influence student performance in a UoT in South Africa. The study grouped the identified factors and ranked them according to frequency. This research will no doubt help in understanding the factors that are most influential towards student success and or failure. Lecture attendance; regular study; effort; and tutorials have been identified as most influential in academic performance in this study. There is potential for information gathered in this study to be considered when other institutions or departments conduct similar studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The determinants of student success captured in this study have been derived from one source only necessitating caution in terms of generalisation despite the similarities of the factors to previous studies. It must be borne in mind that different studies are influenced by a unique set of factors.

It might help to conduct a comparative study of the perceptions of both lecturers and student's factors as it would provide insights on the possible approaches towards success enhancement from both parties. This study only used second year students as the target population. This brings in another recommendation in which including third year students as part of the population study would do since they also understand the contextual meaning of success and failure as defined in this study.

Further studies may be carried out to identify how the identified success and failure factors inter-relate. It may be insightful to compare the factors and factor rankings of responses from second year students from other qualifications; for instance: Accounting students and Human Resources Management students to see if difference in disciplines results in statistically significant differences in responses.

Lastly, this study has presented its results descriptively perhaps given the design employed which was to simply ask students to list factors influencing their academic performance. Perhaps a more sophisticated mode for this research would employ a more rigorous debate through a critique of the literature and an in-depth analysis of results utilising SPSS and or any other statistical tool.

NOTES

- 1) Public universities in South Africa are divided into three types: traditional universities, which offer theoretically-oriented university degrees; universities of technology (Previously Technicons), which offer vocational oriented diplomas and degrees; and comprehensive universities, which offer a combination of both types of qualification (<http://web.archive.org/web/20050301015907/http://www.sauvca.org.za/highered/>). (Retrieved on 27 May 2014).
- 2) The researchers are grateful to the students and the Financial Management lecturer for participating in the study.

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