Exploring Students' Views on Factors Affecting Academic Performance in a South African University

T. D. Sikhwari[1], C. Maphosa[2], L. Masehela[3] and C. Ndebele[4]

[1,3]*Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, South Africa*
[2]*Faculty of Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa*
[4]*Faculty of Education, North West University, Mafikeng Campus, South Africa*

ABSTRACT The improvement of throughput, graduation and retention rates in South African higher education is a national priority. Student academic performance data in one school at a historically disadvantaged South African university has shown that the pass rates have been declining over the past few years. This decline in pass rates has necessitated the undertaking of this study with the intention of investigating the underlying factors impacting student academic performance in the school. The study adopted a qualitative approach located in the interpretivist paradigm. A case study design was followed, and the data was solicited from a purposive sample of thirty-seven students. Data were collected through focus group interviews, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and data was analyzed through content analysis. The study identified some negative factors that are affecting the students' academic performance. The study concluded that steps should be taken to remedy the situation, and recommendations were made as to possible intervention strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The improvement of throughput, graduation and retention rates in South African higher education is a national priority, and there have been various research studies on factors affecting the academic performance of students in both residential and distance education tertiary institutions. A Department of Education study on graduation rates at South African higher education institutions indicated that only thirty percent of first entering students had graduated after five years of study (Nel et al. 2009). According to Badat (2009: 11), "throughput rates for 2000-2004 were between thirteen percent and fourteen percent, and the cohort graduation rate was forty-five percent in 2004 with an overall dropout rate of forty-five percent". Breier and Mabizela (2007: 281) also observed that only fifteen percent of students who enroll in South African universities are able to complete their degree programs in designated time, whereby there exists a "thirty percent dropout rate after the first year, and a further twenty percent dropout after their second or third year". Such an observation is a cause for concern as the government invests a lot of money in higher education and expects better throughput and graduation rates. In order to reduce these high attrition and dropout rates and improve the graduation rate, it is incumbent upon the higher education sector to understand the nature and extent of students' academic challenges in universities.

The literature review revealed the following as some of the factors affecting learning in higher education.

Lecturing Style and Lecturer Attributes

Students in contact institutions consciously interact closely with their lecturers. In the day-to-day interaction between students and lecturers, lecturer attributes can affect the students' academic performance. Adeyele and Yusufu (2012) are of the opinion that the availability of resources and satisfying the minimum standards set by a national quality agency are no guarantee for good performance, but what matters most is the ability of the academic staff. Mlambo (2011) argues that students' learning preference and lecturer's teaching style have been proven to impact positively the performance of students in higher education. Shah (2009), in her PhD study, found that the students' performance improves when lecturers show respect to their students. Students need to feel comfortable in the presence of their teacher. Clay and Breslow (2006) found that students are motivated to attend classes even if the topic under discussion is uninteresting whereby the lecturer brings about active learning approaches in the teaching of the content.

Matsumura et al. (in Schwerdt and Wuppermann 2008) looked at the effect that the quality of assignments has on student achievement. Using hierarchical linear modeling, they found that a small part of student test score variance could be predicted by assignment quality. The relationship between assignments and student achievement was also analyzed by Newmann et al. (in Schwerdt and Wuppermann 2008). These researchers found that more intellectually challenging assignments are related to higher gains in test scores. Wenglinsky (in Schwerdt and Wuppermann 2008) used multilevel structural equation modeling to analyze the impact of different teaching practices on student test scores in Math and Science. He found that the use of hands-on learning activities like solving real world problems and working with objects, an emphasis on thinking skills and frequent testing of students, but also more individualized assessment through projects and portfolios are positively related to students test scores. Rahimpour and Magsoudpour (2011) observe that use of different and stimulating tasks motivates students towards completion of the tasks.

A more task-based approach becomes a useful way of involving learners in learning as it is based on the constructivist theory of learning (Jeon and Hahn 2006). Students learn better by interacting and sharing as they work on given tasks.

On the importance of student interaction in learning, Lee and Rha (2009) observe that teaching and learning in the university should be conducted in such a way that students are able to discuss with their lecturers, as well as with fellow students. This ensures that students learn from lecturers and from one another.

The Role of Assessment Feedback

According to Jordan (in McCann and Saunders 2010), both assessment and assessment feedback play a fundamental role in underpinning student learning in higher education and as such, should be an integral part of any teaching and learning strategy. This means that the assessments the lecturers choose to offer students and the ways in which they (the lecturers) give feedback can have a significant impact on the academic performance of students. Brown (in McCann and Saunders 2010:2) defines assessment feedback as, "information which can be given in various forms, in response to an assessment or an individual's or a group's performance of a task with the purpose of motivating the student(s) by informing them how well they have done and how to improve". Thus, feedback should essentially be part of the teaching and learning process because, as Ramsden (1992) shows, assessment has two functions—to tell us whether or not the learning has been successful and in conveying to students what is wanted for them to learn. Several studies point to the importance of feedback in student learning. According to Luckett and Sutherland (2000), assessment is used to provide feedback to students about their progress in order to motivate them and help them improve their learning. Taras (2002) shows that feedback cannot be effective unless the student has understood what the purpose of the assessment was, how it was assessed, and how he or she can improve on the shortfalls in the future. Race (2002) states that in order for feedback to be effective, it should ideally be received within a day or two. McCann and Saunders (2010) assert that for assessment feedback to be most effective, it needs to be timely, relevant, meaningful and offer suggestions for improvement that students can understand.

Module Content

The way module content is structured and how it is presented to students can also affect student learning. Richards (2007: 51) states, "a sound educational program should be based on the analysis of learner needs". Similarly, Schmitt (2002: 136) observes that any course or module based on the students' needs is bound to be "sensitive to learners' needs". The content that students learn in modules should also be related to real life situations. Theall (2004) indicates that application of theoretical knowledge to real life situations enables students to easily understand the learnt material as they can easily identify with it. This is in contrast to theorized and abstract material that may be difficult for students to understand, as it is divorced from their everyday life. Gene and Dean (1998) argue that a curriculum linked to real life situations encourages students to learn more and be more involved in the learning process. Murray et al. (1998) believe in what they term 'learning through problem-solving'. This suggests that content in

courses and modules should be planned in such a way that it poses problems that students should try to solve. If content is presented in such a way that it compels students to memorize facts, it may not assist students to be problem-solvers or critical thinkers (Murray et al. 1998). These researchers further postulate that a problem-centered learning approach is based on the realization that students are able to construct their own knowledge as individuals and in groups and share the constructed knowledge.

Learning Strategies and Other Aspects Related to Studying

According to Cukras (2006), university students face the challenge of understanding assigned tasks, selecting appropriate study strategies for interpreting and reviewing the assigned tasks and self-monitoring their understanding. Cukras (2006) states further that students must develop a number of study strategies that can be selectively utilized to meet particular demands of the learning material and maximize their understanding of the material. Most students find it difficult to use their time effectively. Students have a lot of work to accomplish each semester at university, and it is, therefore, important that they learn how to use their available time wisely. Poor management of time is often caused by lack of planning for one's study. In most cases, students cannot balance their time between study and leisure. Mushishi (1997) suggests that a time schedule sheet should be used to ensure good and effective management of one's study time. The above view of a study time schedule is supported by Du Plessis et al. (1995) who emphasize that the time schedule can be advantageous if a student is able to stick to it.

Language Competence

Although English has been a medium of instruction in South African schools for many years, students form disadvantaged backgrounds have not fully acquired the skills of speaking, reading and writing it, which are important areas of language competence (Jama et al. 2008). Language competence may, therefore, be regarded as another factor affecting the learning ability of students and their academic performance.

Coping with Social and Emotional Demands

The unfamiliarity of a tertiary environment, especially to first entering students, may be a source of anxiety, feelings of insecurity and stress (Snyders et al. 2005). It is imperative that students acquire knowledge of the nature and causes of stress in order to cope with stressful situations that may negatively impact their learning efforts. Entering a new environment also entails forming new relationships. According to Snyders et al. (2005), it is only through rewarding relationships that students can fulfill their potential and achieve success. McCombs and Miller (2007) are of the opinion that learning is influenced by social interactions, interpersonal relations, and communication. McCombs and Miller (2007) emphasize that if students have good relationships with teachers, they experience their academic work as meaningful, and this promotes their understanding. On the contrary, when students experience poor relationships with their teachers, they see their academic work as coercive, irrelevant and not helping them achieve their academic goals (McCombs and Miller 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore the students' views on factors affecting their academic performance, specifically lecturing style and lecturer attributes, assessment feedback, module content as well as academic and psychosocial challenges in a particular school at a university.

Research Questions

Based on the background and the literature, and to address the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated:
- In which ways do lecturing styles and lecturer attributes affect students' academic performance?
- How does assessment feedback affect students' academic performance?
- How does module content affect student learning?
- What are the students' academic and psychosocial challenges at university?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design. Qualitative studies are known for their ability to understand phenomena from the participants' point of view (Bogdan and Briklen

1998). The study sought to establish factors affecting students' academic performance from the point of view of the students themselves. The study was carried out in one school in a selected university. The school was selected as it has experienced a decline in pass rates and graduation rates, and hence it was considered an information-rich site.

Population and Sampling

Students from second year up to fourth year in the participating school formed the population of the study. A purposive sample of 25 male and 15 female students participated in the study. These students were drawn from second to final year and were deemed experienced enough with teaching and learning practices in the university to provide useful insights on factors affecting students' academic performance.

Data Collection

Focus group interviews were used as a mode of collecting data from the participants. Participants were interviewed in groups of eight and six. Six groups of students were interviewed, and these were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Reliability and Validity

According to Maree (2010: 80), validity and reliability in qualitative research refer to "research that is credible and trustworthy". In order to ensure reliability and validity of the outcomes of the study, the researchers ensured that there were no biases and undue influence during the whole interviewing process. This process adhered to the recognized procedures, which ought to be followed when coding, categorizing and analyzing data. Furthermore, the research included primary data in the results to allow the reader to see the basis upon which the researchers' conclusions were made (Wolcott, in Eisner and Peshkin 1990). For example, some of the participants' views were given with actual quotations as evidence.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through content analysis. Interview transcriptions were coded and categorized, and thereafter analyzed for patterns that emerged as themes.

Ethical Issues

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research. They participated voluntarily, and they could terminate their participation at any time if they so wished. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the university.

RESULTS

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

Category 1: Module Content

Interesting modules, less interesting modules, and availability of reference books are themes that emerged in this category. Some brief comments on each of the themes follow.

Interesting Modules

The participants expressed their feelings about modules, which they regard as interesting. Participants said these modules are challenging and stimulate their thinking. The practical component is said to be sufficiently provided than just theory and one is encouraged to think more about applying knowledge in real life situations.

Less Interesting Modules

Participants also indicated that there are modules that they regard as less interesting. Participants pointed out that in some of these modules they are just repeating the subject matter they did in high school. Assessments are said to be less challenging in some of these modules, and students are expected to do more theoretical work than practical tasks. In addition, the demands of assignments are not articulated. Some participants' direct quotations are: *"Some assignments are not clear. You do not know what you are expected to do"*.

Availability of Reference Books

Participants indicated that it is difficult to get proper reference books in the library. The few books, which are available, are reported to be very old.

Category 2: Assessment

Provision of feedback was the only theme that emerged in this category.

Provision of Feedback

Participants commented as follows about feedback regarding assignments and tests:
"Some assignments are never brought back to students, but semester marks appear."
"In some instances, a test is written even when the first one is not yet brought back to students."
"When feedback is given, students are not informed how they should answer the questions." "Sometimes feedback is given a week before semester marks are released."
"With some assignments all students get the same mark. Some assignments come back with no comments, only the marks."

Category 3: Lecturer Attributes

Unapproachable lecturers and lecturer favoritism were themes that emerged in this category.

Unapproachable Lecturers

Participants indicated that they find it difficult to consult some lecturers when they have problems with subject content.
"Some lecturers make us afraid to interact with them. They would just crush the student's spirit. It is like they have a personal grudge against students."
Some lecturers are said to mention phrases like, *"You are dull"* or *"you are stupid"*, referring to students. Some lecturers discourage students by always saying, *"You will all fail this module."*

Lecturer Favouritism

Participants indicated that some lecturers appear to favour certain groups of students in class. For example, when asking questions, some lecturers will always point to those students who get high marks in assignments and tests. With regard to gender favoritism, participants said that some male lecturers appear to favour female students: *"They always point at females in the class."*

Category 4: Students' Academic Challenges

Language problem, time management and academic writing are themes that emerged in this category.

Language Problem

Language competence is regarded as another serious academic challenge for students. Participants indicated that some lecturers contribute to students' inability to acquire English language skills, particularly speaking. Participants said: *"Some lecturers give examples in their mother tongue when teaching in class". "Some lecturers penalize students for language mistakes in tests and assignments without showing them how they should correct those mistakes."*

Time Management

According to participants, students' lack of time management skills leads to postponement of tasks and subsequently poor academic performance.

Academic Writing

Participants said that students in the school have not yet grasped academic writing skills. Participants felt that there should be some form of academic support to deal with the issue of academic writing.
Participants said: *"The problem in the school is the lack of tutors, otherwise they would help with academic writing."*

DISCUSSION

The participants' comments in category 1 have shown that module content is one area that needs special attention regarding how it is structured and presented to students. Peacock (2001) asserts that lecturers should ensure that module content and resultant teaching approaches are in line with students' needs. It is also important that the content that students learn in modules should, as far as possible, be related to real life situations. In the case of the school in question, it means that more practical work should be completed in various fields of spe-

cialization. Module content should not just be theoretical and divorced from the students' real life experiences and the complexity should be aligned to the level of study (Maphosa et al. 2014a). One of the reasons why some modules are regarded as less interesting is that students do more theoretical than practical work. Participants indicated that some modules are less challenging and do not stimulate thinking, especially with regard to assessments thereof. Murray et al. (1998) suggest that content in courses and modules should be planned in such a way that it poses problems to students and also assists in solving community problems (Maphosa et al. 2014b). If content is presented in a way that compels students to memorize facts, it may not assist students to become problem-solvers or critical thinkers (Murray, Olivier and Human 1998). Participants indicated that lack of reference books is another impediment in the process of mastering module content. According to social exclusion theory (Brandsma 2000), students are denied access to information due to a lack of appropriate resources such as reference books, especially in historically disadvantaged institutions. This lack of resources becomes a hindrance for students when executing their academic tasks because they cannot get appropriate information.

Participants' comments on assessment (category 2) focused on the way feedback was being provided in the school. Students appear to be dissatisfied with the way in which some lecturers handle feedback. The importance of feedback in learning has been pointed out in several studies. According to Luckett and Sutherland (2000), if feedback is properly provided to students, it can motivate them and improve their learning. Participants indicated that in some instances, they do not get feedback on written assignments and, if feedback is provided, it may be very late. Race (2002) points out that feedback should ideally be received within a day or two in order to be significantly effective. Race (2002) states further that feedback should not dampen students' learning spirit, and as such words like 'weak' or 'poor' should be avoided as far as possible. Chong (1999) is of the opinion that regular, frequent and immediate feedback is usually more effective than irregular, infrequent and delayed feedback. Rosenshine and Stevens (in Chong 1999) suggested that frequent feedback enhances students' learning processes.

Kulik and Kulik (in Chong 1999) argue that immediate feedback works far better than delayed feedback because it shows students the mistakes in their work and prevents them from repeating the same errors. Brophy and Brophy (in Chong 1999:8) emphasized the importance of "specific and explicit feedback". These researchers argued that students should be told exactly which aspects of their responses are correct and which are incorrect.

Research has found that students' performance improves when lecturers show respect towards them. In other words, the interaction between students and lecturers should be characterized by respect and trust. If students' interaction with the lecturers is cordial, it might increase their level of commitment to academic tasks. Participants indicated that they find it difficult to interact with some lecturers because of the latter's negative conduct and attitude. It is a common occurrence that students complain about a negative attitude of a lecturer at a tertiary institution. In such a situation, students will develop a negative attitude towards a course (module) offered by the lecturer concerned. According to Yaworski et al. (2000), students who develop positive relationships with their lecturers feel more comfortable in approaching them when they need assistance. The same researchers further indicate that the professors who were interviewed in their study generally agreed that it was the high achieving students who perceived them as experts and sought their advice. In contrast, the low achieving students did not perceive their professors as experts and often did not trust their professors' judgments concerning their work. Aiken (2002: 162) argues as follows: "Of all the factors that influence student learning, one of the most important is the classroom teacher. The abilities, attitudes and personality of the teacher can have a profound effect on the extent to which students benefit from school experiences."

Student academic challenges range from language problems to difficulties in academic writing. According to Ayliff, in Jama et al. (2008), students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds have not fully acquired and grasped the skills of speaking and writing, even though English has been a medium of instruction in South African schools for many years. Participants expressed their disgust as a result of staff members who use their mother tongue instead

of English when teaching, and they indicated that these staff members are contributing to students' inability to acquire English language skills. Another challenge facing students is time management. Most students find it difficult to use their time effectively. Poor management of time is said to be caused by lack of time management skills. Participants indicated that many students in the school still lack academic writing skills. Snyders et al. (2005) point out that students arrive at university with different levels of writing skills. Many students are still far less experienced in organizing their thoughts into a logical and coherent argument and would benefit greatly from academic writing programs (Snyders et al. 2005). Academic support measures such as academic writing are important support measures for students in higher education (Tangwe and Rembe 2015).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the way in which module content is presented to students might influence their attitude and motivation towards a module, and ultimately, their academic performance. This conclusion is substantiated by participants' views concerning 'interesting' and 'less interesting' modules in the school. It is important that lecturers should take the interests of students into consideration when structuring presentations of module content. It was noted that students' mastery of content could be enhanced if reference books are readily available. This is difficult in historically disadvantaged institutions, which are still struggling to have adequate resources.

With regard to assessments in the school, it was indicated that feedback was not properly handled in some modules. In the preceding discussion, various researchers have indicated the importance of feedback in improving the academic performance of students. This research has revealed that feedback was not properly given in the school, and as such it may not serve the purpose it is intended for. It is hoped that the issues raised by participants concerning feedback will be considered and some steps taken to remedy the situation.

The research has also highlighted some issues concerning lecturers' conduct and attitude towards students. It is evident that students are not free to consult some of the lecturers in the school, and this may have a negative impact on the academic performance of students. Any interaction between students and lecturers should be characterized by respect and trust.

Students have some academic challenges that need further investigation. These include language problems, time management and academic writing. The university in question has long been faced with the problem of a large intake of academically disadvantaged students from poor educational background. The secondary schools from which these students come have little or no resources necessary for adequate academic preparedness. It would, therefore, be appropriate to implement, for example, academic writing skills programs for first year students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study as well as the literature, the following recommendations are made.

The school should put in place staff development programs in liaison with the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning in the university. Such programs will assist lecturers with basic teaching and assessment skills. Lecturers should also explain what assessment feedback is for and how to use it by integrating it more clearly into the teaching and learning process. This could help students respond effectively to feedback. Moreover, the school should also liaise with the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning in the university for offering of a series of academic writing and study skills workshops to all first-years in the first semester of every year.

It is also recommended that systematic monitoring of students' academic performance should be put in place to identify 'at risk' students in time and put in place appropriate intervention measures such as mentoring and supplemental instruction. Furthermore, there should be a balance between theory and practice, especially with regard to professional and/or career orientated degree programs. Students should also be afforded opportunities to apply their knowledge in workplaces relevant to their fields of study and rendering services in the community. In addition, academic staff should help students see themselves as capable of learning rath-

er than making them feel hopeless and incapable. Lastly, the interaction between students and lecturers should be characterized by mutual respect and positive regard, as this may increase the likelihood of cooperation and student success.

REFERENCES

Adeyele JS, Yusuf YS 2012. Effect of teaching method, choice of discipline and student-lecturer relationship on academic performance. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development,* 3(7): 1-7.

Aiken LR 2002. *Attitudes and Related Psychosocial Constructs: Theories, Assessment and Research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Badat M 2009. Input from Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mohamed Saleem Badat, Rhodes University. In: *Insight Higher Education South Africa,* Issue 01, October 2009. HESA: Pretoria.

Bogdan RC, Briklen SP 1998. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Brandsma J 2000. Education, Equality and Social Exclusion: Final Synthesis Report. From <ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/improving/docs/ser-cluster-education-social-exclusion-synthesis.pdf.> (Retrieved on18 November 2012).

Breier M, Mabizela M 2008. Higher education. In: A Kraak, K Press (Eds.): *Human Resources Development Review 2008: Education, Employment and Skills in South Africa.* Cape Town: HSRC Press, 278-299.

Chong VK 1999. *Co-operative Learning: The Role of Feedback and Use of Lecture Activities on Student's Academic Performance.* Churchlands: Edith Cowan University.

Clay T, Breslow L 2006. Why Students Don't Attend Class. *MIT Faculty News Letter,*17.

Cukras GG 2006. The investigation of study strategies that maximise learning for underprepared students. *College Teaching*, 54(1): 194-197.

Du Plessis I, Du Toit B, Roos P 1995. *Effective Study Strategies.* Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Eisner EW, Peshkin A 1990. *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: The Continuing Debate*. Columbia: Columbia University.

Flowerdew J, Peacock M 2001. *The EAP Curriculum: Issues, Methods and Challenges.* Cambridge: CUP.

Gene B, Dean WL 1998. *Connecting the Curriculum to Real Life, Breaking Ranks: Making it Happen*. National Association of Secondary School Principals. Peston: VA.

Jama MP, Mapesela MLE, Beyleveld AA 2008. Theoretical perspectives on factors affecting the academic performance of students. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 22(5): 992-1003.

Jeon IJ, Hahn JW 2006. Exploring EFL teacher's perceptions of task-based language teaching: A case study of Korean secondary school classroom practice. *Asian EFL Journal,* 8: 123 – 139.

Lee HJ, Rha I 2009. Influence of structure and interaction on student achievement and satisfaction in web-based distance learning. *Educational Technology and Society*, 12(4): 372–382.

Luckett K, Sutherland L 2000. Assessment practices that improve teaching and learning. In: S Makoni (Ed.): *Improving Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: A Hand Book for Southern Africa.* Johannesburg: WitwateImrsrand Press and HERDSA, pp. 98-130.

Maphosa C, Mudzielwana NP, Netshifhefhe L 2014a. Curriculum development in South African Higher Education Institutions: Key considerations. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* 5(7): 355 - 366.

Maphosa C, Mudzielwana NP, Netshifhefhe L 2014b. Examining the significance of service learning in driving the purpose of a rural-based university in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* 5(16): 302 – 312.

Maree JG (Ed.) 2010. *First Steps in Research.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

McCann L, Saunders G 2010. Exploring student perceptions of assessment feedback. *The Higher Education Academy*, 1-7.

McCombs BL, Miller L 2007. *Learning-centred Classroom Practices and Assessments: Maximizing Student Motivation, Learning and Achievement.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Mlambo V 2011. An analysis of some factors affecting student academic performance in an introductory Biochemistry course at the University of the West Indies. *Caribbean Teaching Scholar,* 1(2): 79-92.

Murray H, Olivier A, Human P 1998. Learning through problem solving. In: A Olivier, K Newstead (Eds.): *Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference for the Psychology of Mathematics Education,* 1: 169-185. Stellenbosch, South Africa, 12-17 July.

Mushishi C 1997. *A Case Study of Some of the Factors which Affect Learning for Black Students in Residence at the University of Cape Town*. MPh Dissertation, Unpublished. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Nel C, Troskie-de Bruin C, Bitzer E 2009. Students' transition from school to university: Possibilities for a pre-university intervention. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 23 (5): 974- 991.

Peacock M 2001. Language learning strategies and EAP proficiency: Teacher views, student views and test results. In: J Flowerdew, M Peacock (Eds.): *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes.* Cambridge: CUP, pp. 268-285.

Purkey WW, Novak JM 1996. *Inviting School Success: A Self-concept Approach to Teaching, Learning and Democratic Practice.* Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Race P 2002. Using Feedback to Help Students to Learn. The Higher Education Academy. From <http://phil-race.co.uk/archieve-of-downlowds-from -previous-website.> (Retrieved on 28 November 2012).

Rahimpour M, Magsoudpour M 2011. Teacher-students' interactions in task-based vs form-focused instruction. *World Journal of Education,* 1(1): 171 - 178.

Ramsden P 1992. *Learning to Teach in Higher Education.* Cornwall: TJ International Ltd.

Richards JC 2007. *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching.* New York: Longman.

Schmitt N 2000. *Vocabulary in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.

Schwerdt G, Wuppermann AC 2008. Do teaching practices influence student achievement? *CESIFO and IFO Institute for Economic Research*, 1-19.

Shah SSA 2009. *Impact of Teacher's Behaviour on the Academic Achievement of University Students*. PhD Thesis. Rawalpindi (Pakistan): Pirmchr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University

Snyders S, Vawda A, Taljaard N, Brophy M, Plaatjies R (Eds.) 2005. *How to Make Higher Education Easier: Take Charge of Your Success*. Port Elizabeth: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Tangwe MN, Rembe S 2015. Monitoring and evaluation of peer academic support programs in South African Higher Education Institutions: A case of one university in the Eastern Cape Province *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 8(2): 249-260.

Taras M 2002. To feedback or not to feedback in student self-assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 28(5): 549-565.

Theall M 2004. Related Course Material to Real Life Situations. From <http://www.theideacenter.org/sites/default/files/item11formatted.pdf.> (Retrieved on 20 November 2012).

Yaworski J, Weber R, Ibrahim N 2000. What makes students succeed or fail? The voices of developmental college students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 30(2): 194-217.