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WAYS OF IMPROVING STUDENTS PERFORMANCES IN ASSESSMENTS FROM INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

A survey on the opinions and preferences of university students regarding ways of improving their performances in the enrolled courses. A total of 400 students from Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) participated in the survey. They are either foundation or first year engineering students. Their responses were summarized and analyzed. The findings show that there are similar responses from the students and a majority believe that the grades obtained at the end of the semester are appropriate and consistent with their efforts. However, there were several participants who believe that study environments and surrounding influences affect their performances. The findings of this research offer suggestions for both students and instructors on ways of improving their performances in learning and teaching respectively.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the assessment performance of the student is the responsibility of all parties involved in teaching and learning. This is consistent with today's labor forces that demand workers with academically excellent and high employability skills. Different aspects of assessments being evaluated with various tools of measurements will enable higher institutions to produce graduates that are competent to meet expectation of work forces locally and internationally.

Lowe (2004) suggested 10 ways of improving student achievement and create learners that include vision sharing among university staffs and students, university should act as a transformation agent, the involvement of administrators and instructors in data analysis, introducing students to their assessment data, increase rigor in instruction and learning, teach

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students the level of rigor, set up student expectation to achieve the objectives of the courses, teach student how to learn and develop appetite for learning, encourage instructors as learners environment and guide them to teach smarter but not harder by incorporate research-based teaching and learning strategies. David *et al.* (2001) believe that parents' involvement in a child's education and good instructor-student relationship contribute positively towards the student's academic performance. Excellent time management with positive attitude towards learning can enhance student performance. Harry (1999) in his article also stated that the only factor that can create student achievement is a knowledgeable, skillful instructor who possesses an excellence classroom management capability that fosters high academic engagement. This instructor ables to use positive reinforcement to motivate students to actively involved in the classroom and thus create a cooperative environment. Students are taught to be self-regulated learners who take the opportunity to challenge task, practice learning, develop deep understanding of subject matters and exert full effort to rise to academic success.

1.1. Factor Influencing Performance

The factors influencing students' academic performances are categorized as follows:

- (a) Students factors
- (b) Instructional factors
- (c) Environment and administration factors

Students factors

- (i) Personal attitude towards learning. (Absent from classes, lack of self motivation)
- (ii) Study habits and time management.
(Lack of preparation for classes & exam and away from parents)
- (iii) Academic background. (Students with minimum qualification couldn't perform)
- (iv) Parental education and occupation.
- (v) Relationship and communication among parents and children. (Interaction problem)
- (vi) Financial problem. (Not enough money to spend or over spent)

Instructional factors

- (i) Academic qualification, background. (Knowledge)
- (ii) Ways of delivery and communication skill. (Especially for new instructors)
- (iii) Self commitment and responsibility. (part time job & not satisfied with current salary scheme)
- (iv) Professionalism

Environmental and administration factors

- (i) Home and classroom environment.
(Family problem, classroom not conducive for learning)
- (ii) Peer influences and social problems.
(mix around with wrong companion, spending more time playing games)
- (iii) Students to teachers ratio. (does not comply with accreditation requirement)
- (iv) Lack of facilities.
- (v) Facilities maintainance.

All the factors discussed above can lead to six powerful forces in education that can be summarized as follow: activity, expectation, cooperation, intervention, diversity and responsibility. [Arthur and Zelda \(1987\)](#). Classroom activities involving students and instructors should meet the expectation as set up in course outcomes and program outcomes. All activities whether academic or social, if executed as plan and with good cooperation and intervention among the institution staffs will improve students performances. Responsibility always comes with commitment. Committed people will try their best to improve themselves in whatever they pursue. Hence whether you are student, instuctor or administrator this will not prevent you to do your best in ensuring a high standard of performance at your institution.

2. METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire requires respondents to list out the factors that they think will help to improve their performances in all various types of assessment that being conducted on any particular course enrolled during foundation year and first semester degree program.

Respondents were also asked to critically evaluate their level of understanding of the subject matter with progress evaluation that will lead to the final grade that they expect to get at the end of the semester. Presentations of the summarized opinions on ways of improving students' performances given by the instructors conducting the survey have been taken into account.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Ways of Improving Students Performance from Students Perspectives

The results of the survey are shown in Figure 1 and 2.

Figure-1. Factors influencing Student Performances from Students' Perspectives

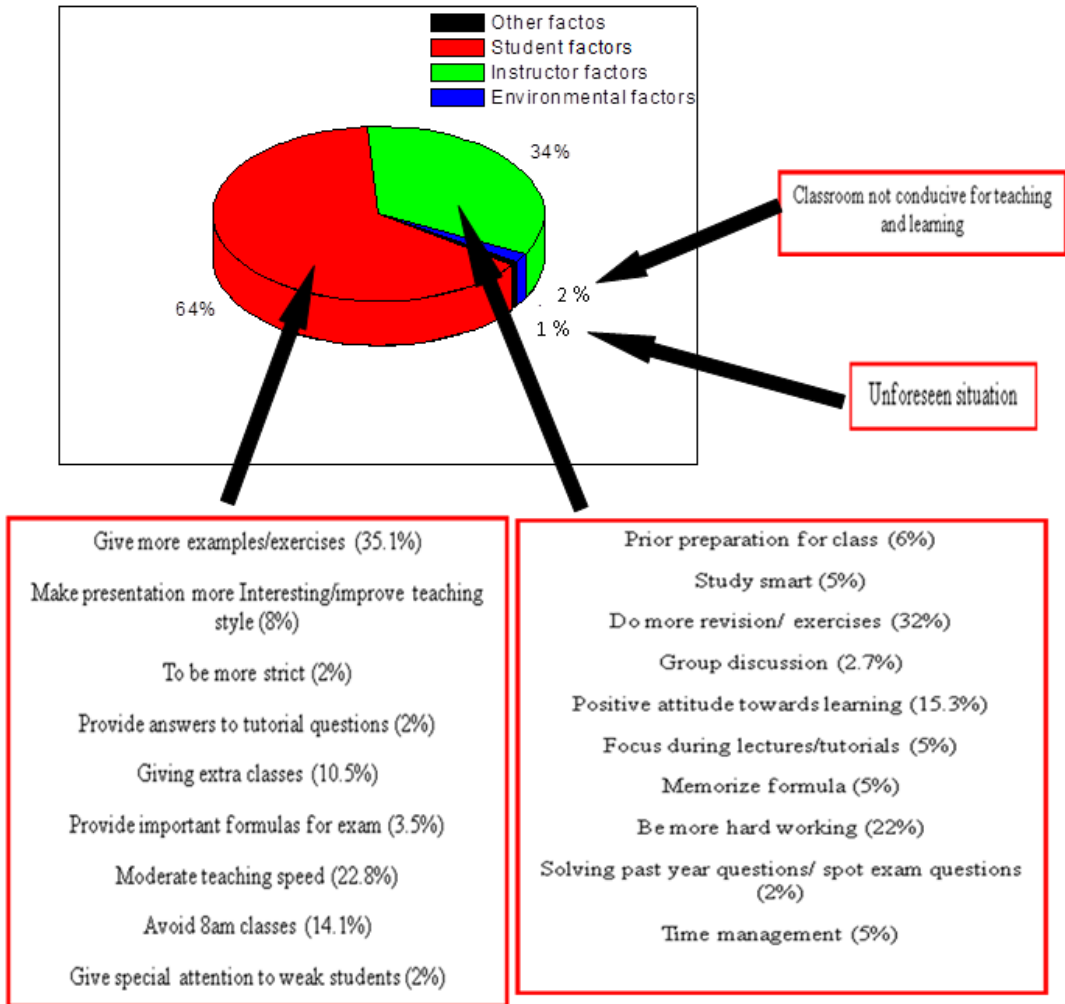
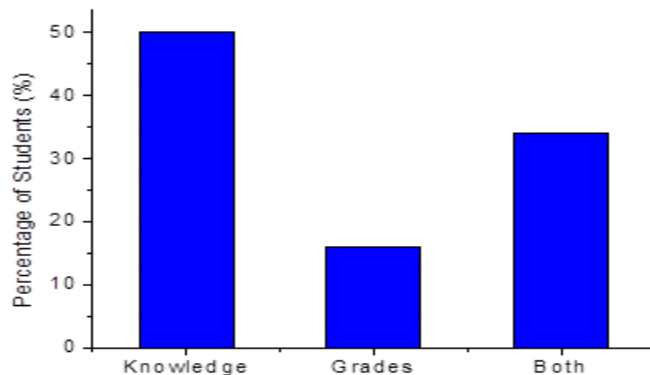


Figure- 2. The Objective of Studying Any Particular Course from Students' Perspectives.



The results of survey as shown in Figure 2 showed that 50 % of the students study for the sake of knowledge, 16 % study for the sake of getting good grades and 34 % study for the sake of both, knowledge and obtaining good grades. Based on the analysis of the results, there are several suggestions from the instructors' perspectives that can be put into implementation and enhance students' academic performances

3.2. Ways of Improving Students Performance from Instructors Perspectives

Students' factors

- (i) Students should have a positive attitude towards learning, never skip classes and having competitive spirits and strong self-motivation.
- (ii) Provide an attendance list or by calling names for classes that less than 70 students.
- (iii) Issue warning letter to those absent for three lectures.
- (iv) The university provides motivational workshops that relate to time management, technique of studying and problem solving.
Students may follow the four steps to improve on time management; create a semester schedule, assess and plan weekly work load, adjust the daily plan and practice schedule evaluation. [Time Management \(2000\)](#)
- (v) Those with the minimum entry requirement should enroll in preparation classes before the semester begins.
- (vi) The university may provide financial assistance to the eligible students.
- (vii) Provide counselling session for students.

Instructors' factors

- (i) Hire instructors with appropriate qualification to meet teaching expectation.
- (ii) Make it compulsory for all new staffs without teaching experience or training (Diploma of Education) to attend teaching and learning workshop or counselling.
- (iii) The university may send the academic staffs for further studies.
- (iv) Make the instructors aware of the self-commitment and responsibility towards teaching.
- (v) The university has to provide clear salary scheme and promotion criteria.

Environment and administration factors

- (i) Parents play an important role in monitoring children's performances.
- (ii) Instill moral values through religion and provide facilities to perform their spiritual commitment.
- (iii) The university should comply with the accreditation requirement by having the suggested students to teacher ratio.
- (iv) Make sure all the facilities in good condition and well maintained.
- (v) Complain regarding facilities, breakdown should be channelled properly and received a quick response.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey showed that students play an important role in achieving good

performance in academic assessment. Although instructional and environmental factors are not as significant as students' factors, they do contribute towards students' academic performances. Almost half of the students think that if they can overcome the above obstacles and take into consideration the suggestions on ways of improving the performances as listed above, they are able to perform better in future. Thus, if steps and suggestions given are put into practices by all the parties involved in teaching and learning, we believe that it will have a positive impact on the educational system.

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