Improve Student Success Through Their Realities

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, research in Higher Education showed that student achievement is particularly influenced by their motivation and their commitment to their studies. However, in recent years, teachers in higher institutes of technological studies in Tunisia observed among a number of students from 1th and 2nd year license economic sciences and management decreased their motivation and commitment to their studies.

In 2008, with the adoption of License Master license PhD program in Tunisia, teaching modules have been integrated in the (personalized career plan, entrepreneurial culture) these curriculum modules were designed to better understand student reality. In the context of training, these modules provide a better understanding of the reality of the students and consequently improve their success.

It is in this context that a study was conducted among students of 2nd year License Economics and Management enrolled at Higher Institute of Technological Studies of Nabeul (ISETN). To do this, a questionnaire and a guide of maintenance have been developed in order to examine the different components of the model of model of motivation, commitment and success proposed by Prégent et al (2009). - Model adapted from Pintrich, Schrauben (1992) and Eccles, Wigfield, Schiefele (1998).

This two-pronged approach aimed to assess and better understand the perceptions of students in relation to the components of the model used, in addition to promoting their reflexivity. The results obtained in particular allow teachers to identify areas of intervention to improve the success of their students.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

This communication is the result of a collective work by a team of teachers Department of Economic and Management Sciences in collaboration with the Director of Studies in the ISET of Nabeul. It aims to present the results of a completed fall 2013 with the main objective exploratory studies to develop a better understanding of the reality of the 2nd year students of economics and license management to identify areas for intervention improve their success. This interest in better understanding the student actually broadly follows the recommendations of the Ministry of Higher Education in Tunisia.

The first section of this article presents the context behind this research project and objectives inherent in the latter. The second sections briefly state the theoretical framework on which this study is based. The third section depicts the methodological elements that guided the collection of data from students referred. In the fourth and the fifth section, the main results are presented and discussed. The first courses of action that were identified under conditions of student success are finally revealed in conclusion.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

During the second year students take five courses: three disciplinary courses, technical, course data analysis and two language courses. The first four courses are compulsory and must be inculcated notions are fundamental to exercise the professions related to business administration.

Despite repeated and unequivocal about it with students' indications, we observe a decrease in recent years their academic performance in these courses. This concerns us, especially as the conditions of assessment remained essentially the

same over time: a constant team teaching, course content unchanged, similar examinations, criteria identical correction.

Students also seem to us little incentive to invest in learning their future profession. They say find difficult assessments and claim lack of time to prepare the required work. Their absenteeism rate class is growing and we have the perception that they are more likely to check boxes (I finished it even though I did not understand much).

In this context, we decided to conduct a study to develop a better understanding of the reality of our students - that is to say, the relationship they have with their studies - in order to identify possible intervention to improve their success. At the same time, we wanted to find a way to make them think about their motivations, perceptions, attitudes and learning strategies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before explaining briefly the theoretical framework used for this study, we consider it relevant to define the concept of success based on our thinking.

The acquisition and integration by the student or the student knowledge and skills in connection with a high-level training registering the personal project and at the same time contributing to the development of the artistic professional, scientific, cultural, civic and personal.

In recent years, research in Higher Education showed that student achievement is particularly influenced by their motivation and their commitment to their studies.

To make intelligible the dynamics underlying these two phenomena in the acquisition of knowledge in a university context, Prégent et al. (2009: p. 252) have shown in a model of motivation, commitment and success (Figure 1).
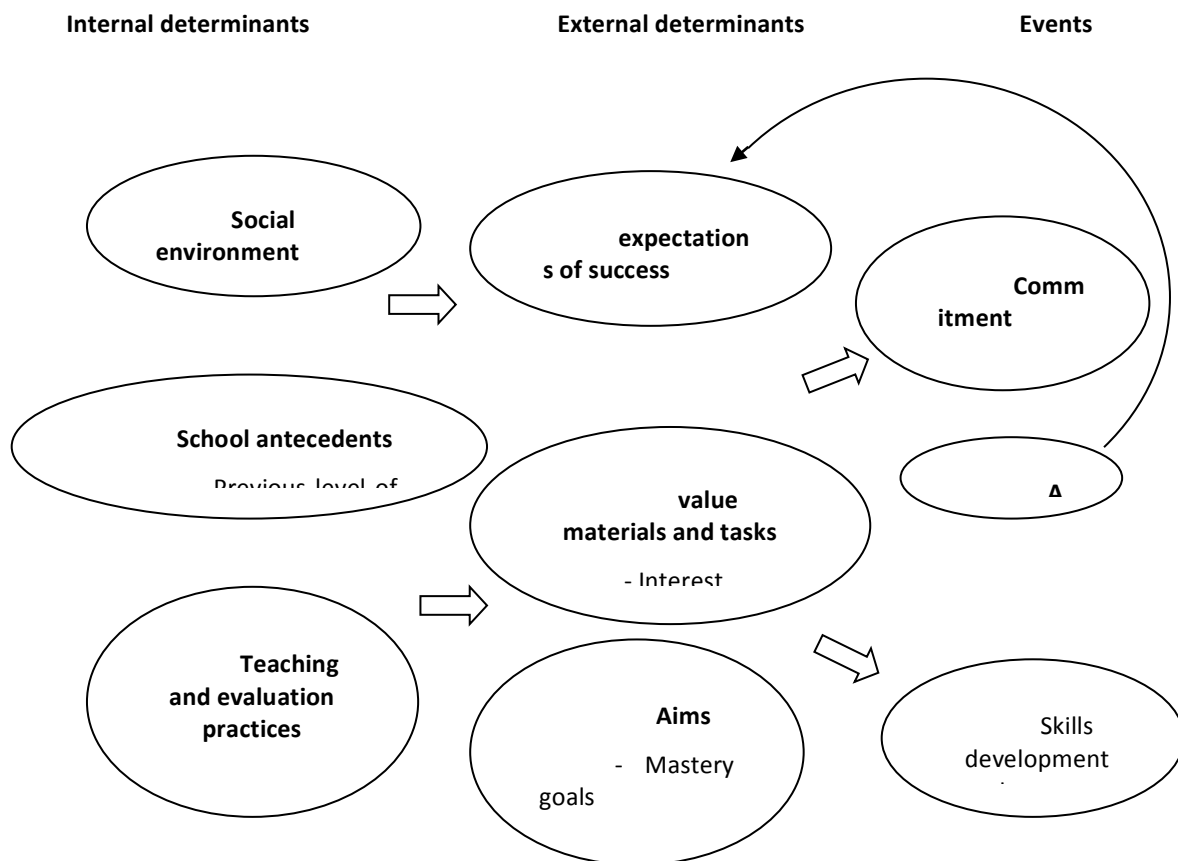

Figure 1. Model of motivation, commitment and success of Prégent, et al. (2009) - Adapted from Pintrich and Schrauben (1992) and Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele (1998).

Motivation is presented as a dynamic state that has its origins in a series of internal and external determinants that drive

the student to actively engage in the learning process. Prégent et al. (2009: p. 252-253) describe their model as follows: "The dynamics of the model assumes that all of these assumptions could have an impact on the level of commitment (cognitive engagement and behavioral engagement) and perseverance. In turn, commitment levels and high persistence significantly contribute to skills development and success. Finally, the loop effect, the student is constantly reviewing one or the other components of the model after every change that may affect the development of their skills and achievements. "

The components of this model form the framework of this study and associated indicators What Prégent et al. (2009) to each of them guided us in the development of our tools for data collection.

METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

For the purposes of this study, two methods of data collection were selected, a questionnaire survey (quantitative methodology) followed by a group discussion (qualitative methodology).

Questionnaire survey

As a first step, a questionnaire survey targeting 52 students in the 2nd year was conducted in early October 2013. This survey was designed to measure students' perceptions in relation to five themes: 1) curriculum, 2) factors influencing motivation to learn and commitment to studies, 3) faculty task, 4) learning strategies used and 5) skills and attitudes to business of a manager.

The questionnaire included 40 questions. The first 35 questions were formulated based on indicators identified by the authors of the model used and by Bédard and Viau (2001). The last five questions were used to collect socio-demographic data. The questionnaire was validated by the project team and has been the subject of a pre-test.

It was given to the students covered in class, after a course to ensure a good turnout. Students have previously been informed by the project manager of the objectives of the survey as well as ethical rules and participation laid down (voluntary and anonymous, confidential data processing). The participation rate was 88%, ie 46 respondents completed the questionnaire.

DISCUSSION GROUP

In a second step, the students of the 2nd were invited to participate in a panel discussion that took place in early December 2013. This approach had two objectives: to have a better understanding of some of the results obtained through the questionnaire and encourage reflexivity students referred.

Group discussion, semi-structured type was made from a discussion guide included 15 questions. These were grouped into five themes: 1) presence in the classroom, 2) understanding of the requirements and guidance of teachers, 3) perception towards faculty task, 4) improving conditions of student success program and 5) reflexivity. This guide has been validated by the project team. Ten students agreed to take part in group discussion. Previously, the project manager briefed the objectives of the discussion as well as ethical and operating rules established. For this purpose, a consent agreement and confidentiality agreement was signed with the participants. The discussion lasted an hour and half and is subject to an audio recording.

RESULTS

This section presents the main results obtained in the course of the study. They were grouped into four themes.

INTEREST IN CURRICULUM AND COURSES AND PERCEIVED UTILITY CLASS ATTENDANCE :

The survey respondents were very likely to show their satisfaction with their curriculum. Indeed, 93% of them are satisfied with their choice of program and 78% expressed the view that the license provided useful course the reality of a business manager. However , respondents admitted that their level of interest in the subject of compulsory courses Grade 3 differed significantly from one course to another, the average ranging between 2.89 and 4.17 were obtained for each of the four courses on a scale of 5 , where 5 corresponded to a very high and 1 interest, not a high interest. In addition, nearly a quarter (22 %) of respondents indicated that they had occasionally or rarely in the classroom for their courses.

The focus group participants were invited to comment on what they believe motivated students to attend class for their courses.

They relied mainly on two factors. The first was the perceived benefit on the explanations given by the teacher during a class more students have the perception that the explanations provided in the class help to understand the material , the more he says motivated to present themselves to benefit. The second factor was the perceived added value regarding the dissemination of unique information (not otherwise available in class), as illustrated in the excerpt below:

"The teachers, who leave their examples available, say, on the Internet or [elsewhere], it is less likely to go over. But as in the course [name of course], the examples he [the teacher] actually, they are on the board and they are not elsewhere. We tend to go in just to take those notes. "

To a lesser extent, some participants also mentioned that the fact that their presence in the classroom was important for a teacher motivated them to attend his classes.

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT SUCCESS AND PERCEPTION OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATERIAL AND WORKING METHODS

"Given a learning task , a student still has expectations for its success " (Prégent et al. 2009 : p. 256) . In fact , 89% of survey respondents said they trust in general , in their ability to pass the baccalaureate and 91 % said they thought gain enough knowledge from one year to another program to complete the course .

However, respondents rated more favorably their ability to succeed each of the four mandatory that their understanding of the material in each of these courses. Indeed, respondents gave averages ranging from 3.80 to 4.09 on a scale of 5 (where 5 corresponded to very high and 1 low) when they assessed their ability to succeed in each of these courses while these averages were consistently lower (3.24 to 3.93 on the same scale of measurement) when they assessed their understanding of the material.

As expectations of student success based, inter alia, on the degree of control they believe exercise in their learning (Prégent et al., 2009), survey respondents were asked about their working methods. In a proportion of 43%, they said they had no opinion, disagree, or abstained from answering the question I consider employing effective methods of work to get my way.

On the occasion of the discussion group, so it was deemed appropriate to return to this last point with the participants and to check if they had made changes to their working methods in the session.

The participants mentioned that they prepared for the first time this session a sheet of notes (synthesis) which was authorized during certain examinations. According to many, the preparation of the score sheet has more incentive to revise all the material, compared to what they would do for a open book exam.

Nevertheless, several focus group participants agreed that, in general, their working methods could be improved.

GOALS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHING STAFF EVALUATION PRACTICES

A feature model of Prégent et al. (2009) is that it takes into account the social or professional aspirations of students through the future perspective of the goals pursued dimension component. This dimension " refers to mental representations is the student's future direction, including professional orientation " (p. 260).

For the survey respondents can put some light on the characteristics of mental representations they have of their future profession, they were asked to select the five skills or attitudes

(Among the 15 proposed a list inspired Guide development of skills of a fire economics and management) that seemed most important to them.

The five skills and attitudes held by the largest number of respondents were:

- Judgment (74 % of respondents);

- Demonstrate a spirit of analysis and synthesis (65%);

- Demonstrate critical thinking (63%);

- Rigor and attention to detail (59%);

- Ability to work in a team (57%).

Although more than a majority of respondents believe that a good manager is a professional who is rigorous, more than a third (37%) said they were undecided or disagrees with the fact that a great teacher has stringent requirements about the knowledge and skills that focus on fundamental elements of the course. In addition, 54% of respondents said they were undecided or disagree with the fact that a great teacher is demanding in terms of learning.

Because jurisdiction is "one of the four core values of the profession», it was therefore considered essential to better understand the students' perception regarding evaluation practices of teachers. In this context, the focus group participants were asked to comment on what could justify certain practices and requirements.

From the outset, the participants agreed that being subjected to stringent encouraged them to devote more time to their studies and deepen the course material. Some also added that the teacher evaluation practices were consistent with the requirements of the profession.

On the other side, several participants noted that the severity of some evaluation practices had the effect of increasing their stress levels and affect their balance studies - work - life.

REFLEXIVITY

According Derobertmasure and Dehon (. 2009, p 30) , reflexivity refers to :

«The ability to think deliberately (Peters et al, 2005. De Cock, 2007, Dewey, 1933 cited by De Cock, 2007) on its own practices (Perrenoud, 2001) in order to solve problems (Hatton & Smith , 1995) , that is to say to improve its practical (Tochon 1993). "

One objective of this study was to find a way to reflect the students referred to their motivations, perceptions, attitudes and learning strategies.

As part of the survey, respondents were invited to comment on the following statement: Overall, the result of this questionnaire made me think about my motivations, perceptions, learning strategies and attitude as a student or undergraduate student in mechanical engineering. In a proportion of 63 % of respondents said they agreed with this statement.

To explore the theme of reflexivity with the participants of the focus group, they were asked what they believe the best way to make us reflect on the points listed in the above statement. Several participants mentioned that while the fact of increasing the links between training and professional practice is a good way, because it would help them better understand the realities, issues and challenges of their profession.

DISCUSSION

The present study focused on two objectives. First, it aimed to develop a better understanding of the reality of students to identify courses of action to improve their success. Secondly, she wanted an opportunity to find a way to reflect these students about their motivations, perceptions, attitudes and learning strategies.

Based on the results, we can say that our first goal is achieved, since this study we, among others, allowed:

- Identify factors that could further motivate our students to attend class ;

- Learn that our students recognize that their working methods could be improved;

- Understand that if some students disagree with the rigor of certain practices

- Evaluative teacher, it could be because they have difficulty managing stress

- They cause and the resulting constraints.

We are also able to say that our second goal is achieved, since most of the majority of students interviewed in our survey expressed the view that the questionnaire developed for this purpose had been thinking about their motivations, perceptions,

attitudes and learning strategies. Participants of the focus group we also mentioned that to increase the links between training and professional practice would be another avenue to consider promoting their reflexivity.

CONCLUSION

Although we are still thinking about the follow-up to this study, we can identify some areas for action to improve the success of our students.

To promote their presence in the classroom, we will consider factors they identified in the planning and organization of our courses. To help them invest in their learning effectively, manage stress caused by our evaluation practices and reconcile studies - work - life, we will offer in the first half of 2014 PPP over more times volume. This course will in particular aim to develop skills to foster perseverance and success in school, as a good time management and stress and the use of effective methods of work. Finally, to promote the reflexivity of our students, we will evaluate future ways to increase the links between training and professional practice.

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