Abstract

This exploratory study examined the study habits and academic achievement as indicated by grade level of 40 students enrolled in various programs at MacEwan University. The study participants filled out a survey questionnaire detailing their study habits. The participants also voluntarily shared the marks received on their final exams. Results of the study revealed a significant relationship between study habits and students’ academic performance. It is recommended that students be guided by teachers and counselors to develop good study habits.

*Keywords*: study habits, grades, university students, undergraduates
Influence of Study Habits on the Academic Performance of Undergraduates: An Exploratory Study

Academic performance is typically measured based on student grades. Grade achievement at the institutional level is an important reflection of the university’s prestige (Escuderrichie, 1998). Post-secondary institutions thus have an interest in researching and identifying the major factors that impact student performance scores. However, academic performance is a term that is not easily defined. Nortello-Otervil (2007, as cited in Lamass, 2015) define academic performance as the outcome of a student’s efforts at a place or an establishment of learning. Torres and Rodríguez (2006) considered academic performance to be the level of knowledge demonstrated in an area or subject as compared against the standard; the standard is usually measured by the student’s average grade. Escuderrichie (1998), in his analysis of academic performance, argues that grades measure the results of teaching, however, he was careful to point out that students’ grades are not a reflection of teaching quality. A student’s grade achievement is dependent on many factors including individual ability and aptitude, levels of test anxiety, and the type of assessment applied to the measurement of the score. Examining the issue from a learning perspective, Smith and Bowler (2017) make the point that student scores are not necessarily reflective of student learning and knowledge. According to the authors “a grade is nothing more than a snapshot in time . . . that ultimately fails to reward students working hard in class and not merely memorizing rote information for an exam” (p. 246). It is recognized that the concept of student academic performance is complex and not readily defined, however, for the purposes of this study, academic performance or academic achievement is understood as a level of demonstrated knowledge that is reflected in a mark or grade assigned.
Learning habits are an equally multifaceted concept that eludes a simple definition. Numerous studies have demonstrated that learning strategies play a key role in students’ learning and achievement. Numerous studies stress the importance of students learning to be independent learners able to engage in continuous learning and able to take control of their own learning (Bransford et al., 2007; Grunoll, Collinsski, & Fitzpatrick, 1996; Smith & Bowler, 2017).

Methods Section

This study took place during the fall of 2019 at an undergraduate, teaching focused university in Canada. The institution enrolled approximately 12,000 students (MacEwan, 2019). Data for this study were drawn from a questionnaire administered to 40 first-year undergraduate students enrolled in the following faculties: 12 students were in the Faculty of Arts and Science, 11 were in the Faculty of Health and Community Studies, and 17 were in the School of Nursing.

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