

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' LEARNING APPROACHES AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT UiTM SARAWAK SAMARAHAN CAMPUS



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ABSTRACT

The understanding of the students learning approaches, motives, and strategies is essential whether they are surface, deep, or achieving processors. The determination of how these approaches, motives, and strategies affect their academic performance is also of prime importance to academics and faculties.

The research examines the association between the students learning approaches, motives, and strategies and their academic performance at UiTMCSKS. A total of 257 students participated in the study representing ten (10) diploma programs and three (3) undergraduate programs. The students were tested using a 42-scale item "Studying Process Questionnaires (SPQ)" adopted from Biggs (1987), and General Information Questionnaires (GIQ) designed by the authors. A separate of questionnaires were also distributed to all heads of programs in the study to investigate the expert views on whether there is any particular intervention programs in place for these students.

The results reveal that there is no significant association between students learning approaches and strategies and their academic performance. However, the findings show that there is a strong association between the students learning motives and their academic performance. The students who have surface motives mostly achieved mediocre results (CGPA of 2.00 – 2.99), and similarly, those who have deep and strategic motives are high achievers (CGPA of 3.00 – 4.00). The results also confirm that the majority are surface processors compared to deep and achieving processors.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Research on student learning in high school and university has been developed and well established in countries such as Australia, Great Britain, Sweden, and the USA as compared to Malaysia in general, and Sarawak in particular. The research works conducted by Lavin (1965), Entwistle, and Hounsell (1975), Wilson (1981), Schmeck (1983), Marton, Hounsell, and Entwistle (1984) shows the seriousness of the writers, "... all of whom see student learning as a field in its own right, with its own problems, concepts, and methodologies" (Biggs, 1987: 1).

1.2 The outline of the study

Chapter 2 describes the background, objectives, problem statement and research questions, scope, significance, limitations, and definition of terms of the study. Chapter 3 covers the literature review relating to the key terms used in the study such as learning, learning approach, learning motive, learning strategy and the framework of the research. Chapter 4 explains the research methodology used for this study encompassing the research instrument, sampling, data analysis procedure and other related aspects. Chapter 5 presents the findings and analysis of the data collected. Chapter 6 gives the conclusions and recommendations derived from the data analyzed.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 Background of the Study

Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak Samarahan Campus (in short UiTMSKS), formerly known as Institut Teknologi MARA Sarawak Branch (ITMCS), was established in July 1973. Since then it has been sited at four different locations. Its first campus was located at Batu Lintang Teachers' Training College (BLTC) from 1973 to 1987 where it occupied a portion of the BLTC. Later it was shifted to Semenggok from 1987 to 1989 taking over the facilities vacated by the then Universiti Pertanian Malaysia Cawangan Sarawak (UPMCS). After that UiTMSKS moved to its campus at Semariang from 1989 to 1997, and finally got its new campus at Kota Samarahan in 1997.

Tremendous changes have taken place since those embryonic years in terms of physical facilities, number of students, and human resources. Today, UiTMSKS can take pride in producing significant number of bumiputera professionals and semi-professionals in various fields of education for the state of Sarawak in particular and Malaysia in general. The number of students has increased by leaps and bounds, from just less than 100 students in 1973 to more than 4,000 in 2004. The number of programs has also grown from just two in those early years to 19 at present (comprising of three undergraduate, 11 diploma, two pre-diploma, and three certificate programs).