How Do Millennials Learn?  
Implications for Higher Education Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates how 86 first-semester African-American college freshmen perceive their time management, study, and test-preparation habits. The research questions sought if the freshman students reported study, note taking, and test preparation habits were different from what we would expect if no preferences existed. Participants voluntarily completed the 21-item quantitative survey. The study revealed patterns of preference for study patterns, that students believed they spent sufficient time studying, crammed materials, were unable to study for long periods, had retention challenges, and were generally cognizant of haphazard study patterns. There were strong relationships between having disorganized study behavior, cramming, and difficulty in retention of materials. The study recommends that student development and academic personnel work together to help student develop their students’ academic success skills.

KEYWORDS

Freshman Students, Higher Education, Learning Outcomes, Note-Taking, Retention, Study Habits/Skills, Test Preparation, Time Management

INTRODUCTION

The transition of students from high school to college or university is generally met with sizeable challenges. Students experience problems with studying effectively, managing their time, taking good notes, and preparing for and taking tests. These challenges have a strong bearing on overall academic outcomes, especially at the beginning of the college experience. Effective study, time-management, test preparation, and test-taking skills are pivotal to academic success in enhanced, online, hybrid/blended, and flipped classes. The combination of good academic success skills and exposure to diverse, formal and hidden curricula facilitates successful transition and social integration into university life (Tinto, 1993; Van der Meer, 2009 & Yorke, 1999). Similarly, the quantity of time spent learning in class is a reliable forecaster of student outcomes, especially when preceding academic attainment and competence are controlled for (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2004; Nonis & Hudson, 2006). This study investigated the perceptions of African-American freshmen on their study, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking habits.

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BACKGROUND

There is a growing concern about the inability of first-year college students to manage their time and academic work-loads (Tennant, 1995 and Hardman & Smith, 1999). While earlier research studies focused on establishing the role of perception aspects, such as group position, GPA, and benchmark assessments, in predicting learning results (Nisbet, Ruble & Schurr, 1982 & Houston, 1980), more recent studies have focused on understanding whether non-perceptive features influence educational accomplishments of students. Relationships between non-perceptive determinants, such as learning expertise, learning conduct, and mindset and educational success have also been studied (Adebayo, 2008; Awang & Sinnadurai, 2011; Tella, 2007; Yang Yang, 2011; Bashir & Mattoo, 2012 & Mutsotsotso, S.N. & Abenga, E.S., 2010). Research shows that effective study skills and habits have a positive correlation to academic achievement (Burnet, 2001). While the development of generic study skills is a common focus of universities, there is less focus on using students’ own perceptions of their own study habits to create targeted skills training, which could produce optimal college learning performance (Brophy, 1984). Especially with the increase in online, hybrid/blended, and flipped classes, students no longer need to study just for tests and exams; they additionally need to study course materials before, during, and after class. Considering that more courses obligate learners to work in learning groups, as one of the 21st-century workforce skills, the importance of effective and versatile study skills also increases. Studying in teams requires different skills from solo studying. Moreover, studying for a test requires different skills from studying for a class session, be it hybrid/blended, online, enhanced, or face-to-face. Research has addressed a wide range of issues affecting college students in general and freshmen in particular; however, there is still limited research that focuses on how students themselves and specifically students of color, perceive their own time-management, study, note-taking habits, test preparation, and test-taking habits.

Review of Relevant Literature

Study Habits and Academic Achievement

There is a powerful connection between learning customs and eventual educational results, particularly in the initial tertiary years (Hassanbeigi, Askari, Nakhjavani, Shirkhoda, Barzegar, Mozayyan & Fallahzadehg, 2011; Osa-Edoh & Alutu, 2012). For first-year students, critical expertise in time-management, studying, tackling examinations, researching, and stress management are all necessary for successful college navigation (Earnest & Dwyer, 2010). Studies found that students’ study habits and attitudes determine educational achievement; further, many learners fail, less because of lack of capacity to succeed, but due to their failure to accrue sufficient learning skills (Rana & Kausar, 2011; Aquino, 2011). According to Aquino (2011) both study habits and attitude towards learning impact first-year students’ time-management and academic performance. Similarly, Fazal et al (2012) found some associations between learning ability and educational acts of undergraduates; a significant relationship existed between time-organization deftness, reading comprehension, and effective note-taking. The study also found that learners with elevated educational success employed numerous study facilities, as contrasted to those with educational failure.

Research on the underperformance of freshman attributed insufficient grounding for school, time organization challenges, self-control matters, and inspiration as major obstacles, (Balduf, 2009). Participants revealed that besides their poor time-management abilities and want of self-control, additional features like failure to adapt to self-regulating life, insufficient learning expertise, and personal drive further compounded underperformance. The classroom is a tense environment, wherein diverse features, including classroom magnitude and psychosomatic features, such as student views and discernment, have some impact on their academic outcomes (Lewin, 1948). According to Zimmerman (2000), learners with high levels of effectiveness have a partiality to take on more, labor harder and persevere in difficulties. High self-efficacy and high confidence levels help students
Supporting Arguments for Including the Teaching of Team Competency Principles in Higher Education


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