

Investigation of Psychological Environment of Class with Students' Quality at the University of Guilan, Iran

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research was investigating the relationship of Psychological Environment of class and students' quality of learning at University of Guilan. The population of this research was all students of various faculties at University of Guilan and about 5% of students were selected through cluster sampling method with regard to huge size of population (7200 students) Also, through systematic random sampling. 360 students were selected and 357 questionnaires were filled and returned among 360 distributed questionnaires in various majors. Also 35 faculty members (about 10%) from the Academic staff members at university of Guilan were participated in this research for conducting interviews. Instruments for collecting data were a researcher made questionnaire and interview. Descriptive- analytic method has been used in this research. The findings show that in all cases rejected the research hypotheses were confirmed with 95% of confidence. Also in analysis of interview, much emphasis has been put on the effect of factors affecting on psychological atmosphere of class and quality of teaching and learning. In fact it should be stated that there is a positive and direct relationship between Psychological Atmosphere of class and its factors (students' participation in class, students and academic staffs' interaction, academic staffs' support from student, students' familiarity with learning tasks) and quality of learning. But there was no significant relationship between students competition with their quality of learning. Finally, with regard to importance of mental states of class in learning process and with regard to research finding, necessary advice and recommendations are presented.

Keywords: Psychological Atmosphere, Quality, learning, university.

Introduction

Regarding Psychological environment of class is one of the main issues that has special place in partial quality of teaching and learning. This question has always been posed that regarding what factors and general components are important in partial quality of teaching and learning. In fact, due to existing human factors (teacher and learners) they are considered as the most important base of teaching and learning process. Then, regarding teaching and learning process that involve mental and intellectual components and existing communicative and interactive state, that is necessary for teaching learning process, makes the mental factors important in learning process.

Experiences have shown that little attention is paid to partial part of basic abilities of teaching and much of these abilities have been neglected. Perhaps reason for this problem is non-human sciences faculty and some humanities faculties that have not passed any course related to class management and teaching during the higher education and university in special subject (agricultural, technical and engineering sciences...) and have no any familiarity with basic abilities of teaching. Some studies have indicated that academic staffs can create a situation that facilitates learning by using variables such as clear speech, using proper and various methods in teaching, mastery of contents, creativity and innovation, identify individual differences, enjoy working with student, having fair behavior and good relationship with student (Dadkhah et al, 2010).

Many definitions have been presented about teaching concept. Teaching is a kind interaction or mutual behavior between academic staffs from one side and student on the other side, based on organized and purposeful design for making change in students' behavior (Shabani, 2012). Students and academic staffs investment facilitates learning through participation in an attempt based on cooperation academic staffs role is challenging role that requires permanent commitment and obligation to learning. Professors' attitude and behavior is extremely effective in amount of students' interest and intention. As learners are different from each other, academic staffs are also different, but factors related to academic staffs moral, behavioral and personality characteristics have much positive and negative impact on students learning (Miller and Miller, 2014). In fact professor is creator of a condition in which student finds insight, identifies and reinforces his/her potential talents, and tasks, step in the best method for personal and professional abilities, these changes will happen by reliance on professors desirable features. (Dargahiet, al 2013).

Main responsibility of an academic staff is to facilitate students learning students and academic staffs' investment facilitates learning through participation in an attempt based on cooperation. (Akbar Manjermooei and Keshti Aria, 2015). University of Michigan in U.S.A considers seven applied principles for successful teaching in higher education centers: 1) Encourage students to interact with professors; 2) encourage to participate among students; 3) encourage to learning; 4) presenting immediate feedback to students; 5) emphasis on time in doing task; 6) having high expectation from students; 7) respect to talents and various learning methods (Codde, 2004).

Learning is the most important issue in teaching, some think that Learning happens just by sheer listening to teachers speech but some teachers believe that learners learn when have active participation in class, It is so that teachers definition and assumption of type and range of

teaching duties, actions and class activity will be different from each other (AhmadpoorMobarak and et al, 2014). Qualitative definition of learning has considerable challenges that results from bringing together the interests, expectations and intentions of internal and external university stakeholders (Giertz, 2001). Quality in higher education is meeting person and society expectations through education, research and providing professional services. so university quality depends on students learning utility, quality of conducted researches, and quality of specific services that university members provide for solving society issues and also attempt toward expanding the extent of knowledge (Center of Quality Assessment at University of Tehran, 2011). Also it should be considered that quality of learning in higher education is necessary for not wasting human capitals, financial and worldly resources and coordination between developing educational systems and its performance (Mahdiyoun et al, 2011).

Different methods are applied by different professors for helping students learning and reinforce of comprehension. Students obtain information through different ways and to different amounts and should apply different strategies in class to be sure of learning opportunities (Nandi and et al, 2000). Among applied methods in the world, its students active participation in teaching that can apply teaching art by using effective questions. Studies have shown that students' active participation in learning is one of the best learning methods that encourages student to present in class and doesn't have inactive and listener role (Kruger and et al, 2004). Loftin et al studies (2010) indicated that professor has many roles and for students more involvement in class, professors don't rely on just asking question, but provide a secure environment and without threat for learners to accept the risk of asking question and giving comment without being ridiculed. Classmates and size of class were other important factors.

On one hand, good relationship of professor and student creates positive outcomes such as increased confidence, learning motivation and improving professional skills in student, positive learning experiences, reducing students fear and anxiety, reducing the probability of academic failure and improving professional identity. Also in some cases that professor has good and proper relationship with student and shows his/her interest to students learning, results in improving self- positive concept and his/her cognitive ability (YaghoobiNiya et al, 2013).

Learning course materials is the basic of an educational system and all other issues are around this main and important case. one of the basis of learning and comprehension and understanding the course materials is students presence in class and attention to subject and absence from class and disregarding subject can weak this important goal, that is, learning (Nabavi and Safavi, 2011). Classrooms are a place for exchanging thoughts, information is exchanged and developed in this place and the thoughts are exposed and analyzed or criticized and no change will be made in students without dealing with thoughts that are expressed in classroom (Damari, 2001). purpose of enjoying, with proper educational state and providing better learning conditions is necessary for investing in students emotional health to find more positive attitude toward presenting in class, learning and finally to the job they're learning (FasihiHarandi et al, 2007). This case creates motivation in student.

With motivation of academic progress, individuals follow necessary activities for successful completing of a task and achieving a certain degree of ability in their work to acquire necessary success in learning and academic progress (Yousefi et al, 2009). Goal orientation theory of purpose is the most effective approaches in motivation and has important motivational implications in learning and performance. Goal orientation is purpose based on this hypothesis

that human behavior is purposeful and person is directed by goals. Goal orientation is referred to a series of behavioral intentions that explain subjects' attitude toward participation in learning activities. In the other words, goal orientation, is indicator of coherent patterns of subjects beliefs that causes subject tends to situations by different methods, activates in that case and finally presents a respond (Ghadiri et al ,2011).

One of the most important factor which effect on students and academic staffs' motivation is environment and external stimuli. Class environment has essential and potential role in students' academic, psychology and behavioral performance (Kuperminc and et al, 2001). Psychological environment of class, learning environment and complex, social features and teachers support have significant effects on students learning behaviors, directing their goal, beliefs related to self, casual documents, application of strategies, academic and social motivation (Pintrich,2002).using students perceptions for assessing class environment results from field theory and Murray's need- pressure theory. Levin and Murray (1983) have emphasized on environmental features in human behaviors. They suggest the balance between environmental features (like class experiences) and personal traits is the predictor of human growth and his/her series of behaviors. (Aldridge, Dorman and Fraser, 2004). Based on Mous's theory, classroom environment like human entity has measurable features (Baek and Choi, 2002). In different studies have shown that variables related to class, such as classroom state, teacher-student interaction, type of class management by teacher, organizational behavior and gender have relationship with students' academic progress. Sunger and Gung Goren (2009) showed that perception of classroom environment has positive relationship with learning self-regulated cognitive and motivational factors Hi Ging Choy and sun Gon Beak (2002) in a study as relationship of students' perception of class environment and academic progress in Korea, have concluded that classroom environment was a good predictor for students' academic progress. Cutton (2006), Hejazi et al (2009) believe that there was a positive relationship between perception of classroom environment and academic progress Also many studies indicate the relationship of classroom environment and goal orientation (Renger, 2009).

With regard to what has been said, this research purpose is to investigate the relationship of mental state of class and students' quality of learning at university of Guilan. Researches wish that this effect could make desired changes in educational classrooms and leads it to determined goals.

Research hypotheses

Investigation of following hypotheses are conducted in this research:

First hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between students' participation in class as group discussion (or group work) with their quality of learning.

Second hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between students and academic staff interaction with students' quality of learning.

Third hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between professors support from student with students quality of learning

Fourth hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between students' familiarity with learning tasks and their quality of learning.

Fifth hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between students competition with their quality of learning.

Methodology

This research is descriptive- analytical type that is conducted to influence the evaluation of two variables (psychological atmosphere class and quality of learning). Target population of this research, were all students at faculties and various educational departments at University of Guilan (including Faculty of Humanities, Agricultural Sciences, Pure Sciences, Technical and engineering, Natural Resources) that with regard to huge size of statistical population (7200 persons) about 5% of students by cluster sampling method and systematic random sampling method were classified and selected as statistical sample. Then, 360 students were selected and 357 questionnaires were filled and returned. Also 35 academic staffs (about 10% out of whole academic staffs at university of Guilan) were participated in this research.

Research instruments

1. Researcher-made questionnaire: Because descriptive-analytic method has been used in this research that researchers' goal is objective, real and regular description of a situation or issue, questionnaire has been used for achieving real information.

Naderi and SeifNaraghi (1987) Bust (1987) and Tajdari (1990) cooperation office of area and university (1984) emphasize that questionnaire is as a paper or notebook that a version of it is determined to every survey or unit and is equal to all people.

Main research questionnaire is designed in such a way that its questions are stated based on hypotheses, has 49 questions and answer in table has been set by (absolutely agree, agree, not sure, disagree and absolutely disagree).

2. Interview: Interview was applied as the second instrument of the research that was considered as complementary instrument. Interview with academic staffs was about the impact of psychological atmosphere on quality of learning.

Findings

A-Description of data: This study has been conducted based on information of data related to 357 respondents at University of Guilan that among all respondents, 208 students have been female (58/3%) and 149 male (41/7%). Range of age changes in under study statistical population has been between less than 20 to upper than 35 years that the most percent with 76/2% is related to age group of 20-25 and the least with 0/6% related to upper than 35 years from age frequency. In the other words, distribution of sample population that indicates the most observations is about between 22 to 33, which is the most respondent students are this range of age.

B-Quality of learning: students learning frequency distribution is presented in following table that was evaluated as two-item questions of Yes/No.

Table1.Respondents frequency distribution based on quality of learning.

	Frequency	percent	percent
Yes	231	64.7	64.7

No	126	35.3	100
Total	357	100	

According to the above table, 0.65 of students consider the classrooms with high quality and about 0.35 with no quality.

A-Questions of questionnaire: Descriptive results of questionnaire indicate that the mean of whole item scores of Likert spectrum related to questions of questionnaire is tended toward higher than average, that is (3) and is much closer to agree response and from distribution aspect, all questions have negative skewedness except question 7 that has positive skewedness that is a kind of determiner of mean of whole scores, that is scores are tended toward agree and completely agree.

B-Data analyses: In this section, first research hypotheses were examined and with regard to two-dimensionality of table for analyzing research data, two-dimension test $\chi^2(k^2)$ has been used and then research questions were examined that with regard to three-dimensionality of table for analyzing data, three-dimension test χ^2 has been used. Also, for evaluating intensity of correlation among research variables either in two-dimension tables or three-dimension tables, Cramer's V index has been used for being rectangularity of tables.

Table2. The relationship between students participation in class and quality of learning

Students participation Quality of learning	low	average	high	Total
Yes	2	67	162	231
	0.40	0.54	0.71.1	
No	3	57	66	126
	0.60	0.46	0.28.9	
Total	5	124	228	357
Test result		Df=2		0.003
Intensity of relationship	0.1	Cramer's V	0.003	Sig

Table 3: the relationship of interaction between students in class and quality of learning

Communication between students	low	average	high	Total
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Quality of learning				
Yes	6	74	151	231
	75	56.5	69.3	
No	2	57	67	126
	25	43.5	30.7	
Total	8	131	2.8	357
Test result		Df=2		Sig=44
Intensity of relationship	132	Cramer's V	44	Sig=

Table 4: the relationship between professors' support in class and quality of learning

academic support				
Quality of learning	low	average	high	Total
Yes	7	89	135	231
	41.2	54.3	76.7	
No	10	75	41	126
	58.8	45.7	23.3	
Total	17	164	176	357
Test result		Df=2		Sig=0.000
Intensity of relationship	0.254	Cramer's V	0.000	Sig=

Table 5: the relationship between familiarity with students learning tasks in class and quality of learning

Familiarity with learning tasks	low	average	high	Total
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Quality of learning				
Yes	5	46	180	231
	71.4	50.5	69.5	
No	2	45	79	126
	28.6	49.5	30.5	
Total	7	91	259	357
Test result		Df=2		Sig=0.005
Intensity of relationship	0.173	Cramer's V	0.005	Sig=

Table 6: the relationship between the effect of competition between students in class and quality of learning

Competition between students	low	average	high	Total
Quality of learning				
Yes	8	98	125	231
	50	61.3	69.1	
No	8	62	56	126
	50	38.8	30.9	
Total	16	160	181	357
Test result		Df=2		Sig=0.146
Intensity of relationship	There	Isn't	relationship	

With regard to above table, analysis of all research hypotheses shows that in all other research hypotheses, except hypothesis 5, hypothesis H_0 is rejected and research hypotheses were approved. In the other words test results show that with 95% confidence research hypotheses such as students participation, students interaction with professor and each other professors support from class have relationship with quality of learning If above cases are more reinforced, quality of learning in students will also increase more as the same amount. It seems that about the only rejected hypothesis (competition between students), there was a negative meaning than

positive for competition among students that maybe needs more explanation in this case for respondents, but generally results show that improvement of psychological atmosphere of class has considerable effect on quality of learning.

Conclusions and discussions

1-Genral conclusion of questionnaires

This research was conducted with the purpose of investigating the relationship of psychological environment of class with students learning quality that involving students, making interaction with students, academic staffs support from student, students familiarity with learning tasks, rival between students, discipline and organization, clearness of regulations, professor control over the class, mutual respect between student and academic staffs and students together, were proposed as effective factors on quality of learning and also there was a comparison between students regulations from gender, age and location and two instruments of questionnaire and interview were used.

Quantitative analysis of this research with regard to all research hypotheses shows that all research hypotheses, except hypothesis 5, rejected the hypothesis H_0 and the research hypotheses were approved. Regarding to the hypothesis 5, it seems that competition concept among students has more negative meaning than positive for respondents that maybe needs more explanation in this case: But generally results show that improvement of mental states of class has considerable effect on quality of learning. It should be mentioned that based on Habibi and et al (2009) results show that personal differences at competitiveness level in competition environments are effective factors on performance and for individuals with different competitiveness and motivation features, different competing environments should be designed to perform their best performance. On one hand, they point out to this possibility that non-competitiveness individuals have different explanations about competitive and non- competitive environment and because these subjects don't have much tendency to perform better than others and don't have good interpretation from competitive environment or competition toward others or be better than others and their tendency toward non- competitive environment is more, therefore they experience better performance and learning in competitive environment.

Also comparison of test results and research hypotheses with theorists' attitudes shows that in the first hypothesis (students' participation) test result is a kind of certifier of interaction steps between teacher and student and especially in participation in discussion part, Burton and wing (2001) also approved this group involvement. In this case a research was conducted by weaver and Qi (2005) about class management and extent of participation from students view point. In this research it was shown that students who participate actively in class and discussion, learn more than other students. Also GhasemiyanSafaei and FarajZadegans research (2011) indicated that students' participation in teaching increases the amount of learning, concentration, and attention in class, encourage to participate in class, make students interested in course and this methodology is effective in their learning improvement. Students present with more interest in classroom and number of absents decreased even without calling their names, Sutton and Stegeman's study (2010) about developing methods for increasing participation in class in Australia, shows a near relationship between students participation and increased quality of learning.

Second hypothesis test result (establish communication between students and professor) is certifier of Meager's theory (1991) that emphasizes on feedback between classmates and also attraction and comprehension. In a research by Ghadami and others (2007) about effective factors on establishing between student and professor from medical sciences students perspective in Arak showed that existence of positive relationship between professor and student can be cause and effect of learning motivation in Also based on Abidi's findings (2010) from students perspective, professors proper openness, humility, secrecy, and trusteeship in establishing communication between student and professor, for improving the level of learning, has considerable effect.

Third hypothesis test result (professors' support from student) is certifier of Tyler's theory (1949) that has emphasized on cognitive aspects of learners' behavior and also regarding their recommendations and supporting their ideas. Also Argils theory (1977) about speaking out of class for transferring emotions and controlling reactions that also have supportive aspects, mentions to a kind of hypothesis certifier, Also according to Maddux's findings (2002) social support creates a sense of self- efficacy (that can be a preparation for the findings supportive and autonomous education method improves the emotional intelligence and belief to self-efficacy through facilitate of searching and verbal encouragement. Also Deci and Ryan (2001) believe that there are natural and inner tendency in human for behavior and learning which is reinforced and supported by surroundings or is weaken by disregarding.

Fourth hypothesis result (familiarity with learning tasks) approves Benjamin Blooms theory (1984) that emphasizes on amount of students' mastery in prerequisites related to target learning (learning tasks). Schwarz and others (2012) be live that emphasis has been put on importance of medical students' preparation for achieving constant learner goals in many official bulletins and reports this case can indicate the importance of students familiarity with learning tasks and its effect on their long- term learning.

As it was mentioned it seems that the reason for not approving the fifth hypothesis (competition between students) more was that competition concept has more negative meaning than positive in students. Also SeyedJavadin's (2002) findings showed that students learning increased by increasing academic competition. Creation and development of academic competition is underlie of learning spirit, research and scientific consultation of course his research results were compatible with this research results which showed that students at university of Guilan have no academic competition.

Furthermore results comparison with research antecedent shows that this research result has extreme compatibility with Hojat Ansari s research results (1995) that had shown there is a significant relationship between mental-social state of class and students' academic progress. Also this research results are compatible with standards of Kentucky s state in America (2002) and Wang and Hurtle's research results (2014-2015) and conducted research in Kolkata. Class environment has vital and important role in students' academic and psychology and behavioral performance (Kuperminc and et al, 2001 and 2002) of class learning environment and complex and social features and teachers support has significant effects on students learning behaviors, their goal orientation, beliefs, causal documents, strategies, academic-social motivation, emotional performance, conflict with tasks, academic values and progress (Pintrich 2002) .Lee (1993) in a research about catholic schools showed that existence of friendly environment along with attention and making peace for each other results in increased learning motivation in

students' knowledge and has extremely positive effects on all learners even for students who deal with various academic failures.

2-General conclusions of interview: with regard to academic staffs' perspectives about effective mental states on quality of learning, following general conclusion should be considered:

1-Involving students with regard to conditions and obstacles that were considered by interview professors, but it has serious effect about improving quality of learning.

2-Establishment of communication with students results in quantitative enhancement and qualitative improvement of learning.

3-academic staffs' support from students influences in quality of learning as an inevitable factor.

4-students familiarity with learning tasks should be considered as one of the important basis in quality of learning.

5-competition between students causes development of quality of learning.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in spite of ancient antecedent of mental state of class and its related issues, it has not been much regarded by researchers. Therefore it's necessary to reflect and attempt in this case with goal of reinforcing country education, in schools and higher education and determine its effective and relative factors through scientific researches. Regarding findings we can conclude that when learning environment is desirable, students are encouraged to participate actively in class, supervise their learning process and have a criticism look so we should take step with considering this case in improving mental state of class. Because a good classroom environment improves learning process and then makes more skilled forces and better society.

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