Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 5(10): 709-715, 2011
ISSN 1991-8178

Factors Affecting MBA Students' Performance: Case Study of IBS, University Technology Malaysia

[1]Arezou Ebrahimitouri, [2]Mohammadghorban Mehri

[1]International Business School University Technology Malaysia, Jalan Semarak, 54100 Kuala Lumpur
[2]Ghorveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ghorveh, Iran

Abstract: This paper investigates the factors which affect MBA Students' performance in Management & Cost Accounting Class at International Business School of UTM. In this study 39 students of weekday and weekend classes were selected as the respondents of the questionnaire. The results indicate that Individual Factors are the most important ones in students' performance to weekday classes, while to weekend classes, Social Factors affect the most. This paper suggests that having gathering workshops and interactive group-work assignments can be effective to enhance the students' performance, particularly weekend classes.

Key words: Students' Performance, Individual Factors, Social Factors

INTRODUCTION

Cultivating from the above noted/discussion, this study focuses on investigating the effect of Social, Individual and organizational as three influential factors on the students' performance. The aim of this study is to determine some prominent factors affecting MBA Students' performance in Management & Cost Accounting Class at International Business School of UTM. A total of 39 weekday and weekend students of this class were selected to be the respondents of the study. The findings of this study indicate that there are different prospectives of weekday and weekend students about factors which are prominent in students' performance.

2. Background of UTM and UTM' IBS:

2.1 Background of UTM:

"Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), an innovation-led and graduate-focused research University. It is located both in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia and Johor Bahru, the southern city in Iskandar Malaysia, which is a vibrant economic corridor in the south of Peninsular Malaysia. With a strength of more than 2,000 academic staff, of which more than 200 are foreign graduate faculty members, UTM continuously strives to develop and enhance quality academic and professional programmes of international standard and global recognition. The student population consists of more than 15,000 full-time undergraduate students, more than 6,000 enrolled on distance learning programmes as part-time students and more than 8,000 postgraduate students in various fields of specialisation. Out of this, more than 2,000 are foreign students"(IBS & UTM 's website).

2.1.2 Strategic Thrusts and Goals of UTM:

The main strategic thrusts of UTM are explained as fowllows:

- Contribute to human capital development by providing quality education
- Provide leadership & contribution through research & innovation
- Achieve desirable image & branding that fulfills the requirements of stakeholder
- Contribute to society through community engagement and outreach

In line with strategic thrusts, the following is some of the significant goals of UTM which is in its way to achieve:

- Enhance quality education
- Promote excellence in research, innovation and graduate education
- Enhance professional training and lifelong learning
- Enhance international standing
- Strengthen community outreach
- Provide quality management and effective risk management

2.2 Background of International Business School:

"The International Business School (IBS) was established in 1997 as a graduate school of management to offer management and economic courses. Formed as a Centre of Excellence at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Corresponding Author: Arezou Ebrahimitouri, International Business School University Technology Malaysia, Jalan Semarak, 54100 Kuala Lumpur
E-mail: arezou.e.t@gmail.com

(UTM), a premier technology university, IBS is envisioned to lead the education sector in post-graduate management education. IBS's main focus on technology management was founded upon UTM's core strength in science and technology. Moreover, the establishment of the school fulfills the university's vision i.e. to provide management education and training to engineering students from UTM and other higher learning institutions. IBS provides MBA in Techno-Entrepreneurship, Strategic Management, Healthcare Management, Executive MBA, short course programmes and consulting services"(IBS & UTM 's website).

2.2.1 IBS Governing Bodies:

Although IBS was set up as a separate unit under UTM, the higher learning institution oversees the management of IBS. The management of IBS is headed by a Director and advised by a Board of Advisors chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. In-line with the corporatisation of the university, IBS is geared for self-sufficiency to be operated as a private sector organization structured with three major strategic business units (SBU) namely; Degree Education, Executive Development Programmes and Consultancy.

At the heart of management education at IBS is Technology Management and Innovation. It is a paradigm that focuses on being sensitive to the impacts of the ever-changing technology on organizational management. The creativity and entrepreneurship of managers will strengthen the value of managing and act as the key towards achieving competitive edge; inter-alia, the much needed critical success factor to excel in the business world. IBS is proud to be the first to offer Technology Management and Innovation as a core course in an MBA programme. IBS's comprehensive range of MBA courses, corporate training programmes and consulting services are specialised and industry-relevant to fulfill the demands of today's challenging business.

The MBA degrees at IBS are specially tailored to the needs of students, but the educational objective stands paramount, that students at IBS are being engineered to be future managers and leaders of the industry who are sufficiently creative, innovative, decisive and action-oriented. To instill in them the creativity to apply what they learn is indeed the goal of MBA education at IBS.

3. Factors Affecting Students' Performance:

Education institutions worldwide have always placed great emphasis on the factors governing the performance of students. In order that one of the significant ongoing subjects of debates among educators, academics, and policy makers has been being students' performance and its related determinants as well. There have been many studies that sought to examine this issue and their most studies have focused on findings point out to hard work, previous schooling, parents' education, family income and self motivation as factors that have a significant effect on the students GPA. However, the purpose of this study is to examine the relevant factors related to the University of Technology Malaysia's. Regarding this fact that conditional differences (such as living, educational, teaching and training, etc) may play a role in shaping the factors that affect students' performance, this study's variables may to some extent differs to other examined variables of other researches. Accordingly, the following three main categories of Social, Individuals and Organizational factors are studied in this paper.

Social factors:

The daily routine of university life brings new sleeping and eating habits, increased workload, and new responsibilities. University students are prone to stress due to the transitional nature of university life (Wright, 1967).

The students should adjust themselves to a new social environment, being away from home, and maintain a balance between high level of academic success and this totally new university life. One of the ways to connect, communicate and besides interact with new social environment is creating relationships. Each society consists of its people and each relationship starts with two people. Once two people meet, whether or not they decide to pursue a friendship depends on many additional factors. The structural context not only determines whether individuals meet, but also influences other important factors such as visibility and propinquity. Increased visibility and exposure increase the likelihood of becoming friends. Therefore, a student who is central in a friendship network has more opportunities to access resources that may be important to successful academic performance. Perhaps most importantly, the existence of a positive social relationship is in itself.

Social factors surveyed in this paper, based on relationships exists in a class, grouped into four types such as; Student-Classmates Relationships, Student-Lecturer Relationships, Student-Staff Relationships, Student-Group members Relationships.

Individual factors:

The past few decades have seen a wider acceptance and understanding of the concepts of personality factors and their impact on performance and interactions. It seems reasonable, and indeed the foundational personality literature predicts, that the impact of personality type should be different for different types of courses (Keirsey

and Bates, 1978). The Individual factors examined in this paper include four categories of individuals' backgrounds, their personal features, individuals' work experience and skills.

Organizational factors:

Each organizations facility affects learning. Spatial configurations, noise, heat, cold, light, and air quality obviously bear on students' and teachers' ability to perform. Empirical studies should continue, focusing on fine-tuning the acceptable ranges of these variables for optimal academic outcomes. But what is needed generally would be: clean air, good light, and a quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment which simply requires adequate funding and competent design, construction, and maintenance.

Decisions about school facilities, once translated into brick-and-mortar, affect the daily performance of the generations of teachers and students who use them. These decisions are based on tradition, available technology, experience with "what works," and the changing needs of the times. Good facilities research allows us to productively sort through this mix and can help produce long-term, positive effects on academic outcomes (Schneider, 2002).

There are some essential components related to educational organizations which should be provided by them. Among lots of different organizational factors, variables such as organizations' facilities, their location, workplace atmosphere (like Staff-Staff Relationships) and ergonomic design of the classes considered in the designed questionnaire (see Appendix).

Methodology:

The principal purpose of the research is to survey various factors may affect positively on the performance of 39 MBA students of UTM KL international campus (24 people of weekday and 15 weekend students). The students of this study were in Management & Cost Accounting class at IBS of UT last semester (first semester of 2010).

This research utilized quantitative research methodology. The instrument used to collect the data was questionnaire with closed and open questions (see Appendix). The questionnaire was designed by researcher containing 42 different types of questions for three main sections of A: Social Factors, B: Individual Factors and C: Organizational Factors (which each part explained in details in the previous part named "Factors Affecting Students' Performance"). The types of questions used in it were: 1 warm-up yes/no question, 3 main multiple choice questions that separate each section, then Likert's scale 37 questions for three main sections (Section A/Social Factor 13 questions, Section B/Individual factor 12 questions, Section C/Organizational Factor 12 questions) and also 1 open ended question. The questionnaires were distributed among the weekday and weekend students on 6^{th} and 9^{th} of April 2011, respectively.

The most famous statistics and numbers used to present the quantitative data are percentage and frequency counts. Therefore, the information obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed by MS Excel and SPSS software. Based on these frequency counts, data were classified and tabulated by SPSS and Microsoft Excel as well which will be explained in details in the following section.

Data analysis and results:

In this section, data collected will be analyzed by means of SPSS. At first, frequencies are being discussed then other results are being displayed (Table 1, 2, 3 and Figure 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Table 1: Grade Frequency

Grade					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A+	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	A	7	29.2	29.2	33.3
	A-	5	20.8	20.8	54.2
	B+	7	29.2	29.2	83.3
	B	3	12.5	12.5	95.8
	B-	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Gender Frequency

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	8	33.3	33.3	33.3
	female	16	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

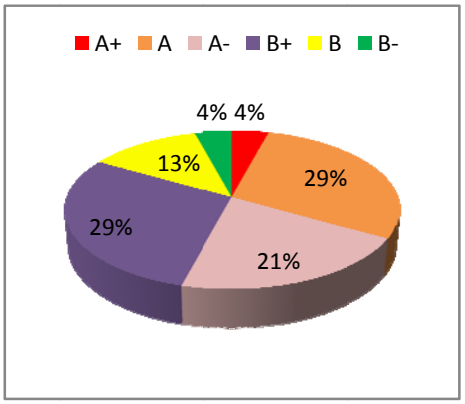

Fig. 1: Grade Frequency of Weekday Students

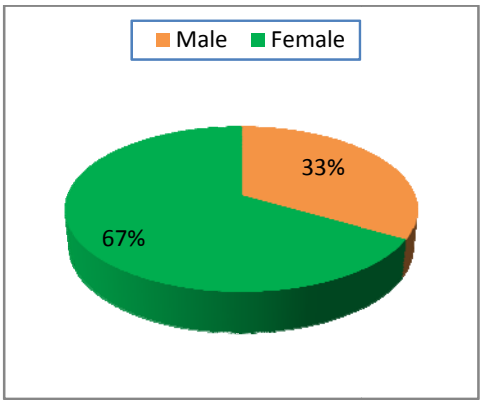

Fig. 2: Gender Frequency of Weekday Students

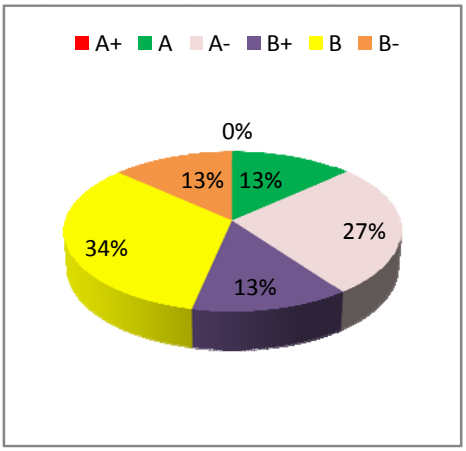

Fig. 3: Grade Frequency

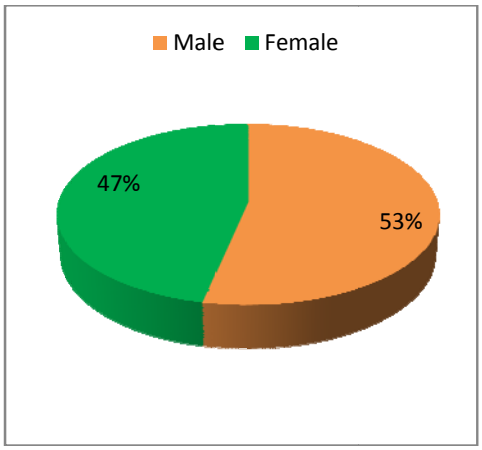

Fig.4: Gender Frequency Weekend Weekend Students Students

Table 3: Age Frequency

					Age
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	24	3	12.5	12.5	12.5
	25	2	8.3	8.3	20.8
	26	2	8.3	8.3	29.2
	27	7	29.2	29.2	58.3
	30	1	4.2	4.2	62.5
	32	4	16.7	16.7	79.2
	33	1	4.2	4.2	83.3
	34	2	8.3	8.3	91.7
	38	2	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

With regard to Tables above (Table 1, 2 and 3), variable frequencies tables shows that in grade table number of students whose grade is A and B+ are seven person and are the most numbers. Gender table (Table 2) shows number of female is more than male in this survey. Finally, at first glance to table of age, it would be found that number of students with age of 27 years old is more than rest of students.

The reliability of this research model is showed in Table 4 and 5. For analyzing reliability, different approaches exist. Here, alpha value in Cronbach's method will be used for examining reliability of model. For having a reliable model, this quantity should be more than 0.7 to ensure reliability of this model.

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.767	12

Table 5: Item-Total Statistics

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
S.Ch	20.0000	15.683	.511	.739
S.L.R	20.6174	15.547	.561	.733
S.S.R	20.3750	15.169	.618	.726
S.G.R	20.0114	14.988	.506	.738
I.Back	20.2992	17.569	.300	.761
I.PF	20.2992	16.569	.364	.756
I.Sk	20.3902	17.326	.332	.759
EDOC	20.2386	15.730	.652	.728
Facil	19.4205	15.541	.353	.763
I.WE	20.2235	17.148	.276	.765
Location	19.9962	19.642	-.190	.793
St.St.R	20.2538	15.775	.490	.741

With regard to two tables above (Table 4 and 5), Cronbach's alpha is 0.767 that proves reliability of this model. Since in Table 5, corrected item-total correlation, four items have quantity below .33 that is criterion, so these four items have to be eliminated from this model. Individuals' backgrounds, individuals' skills, Individual's work experience, and location should be deleted from this table.

Following discussion is showed the regression models which are applying in this study and analysis of Coefficients of variables as well.

Table 6: weekday coefficient of variables

Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Co linearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	V IF
(Constant)	4 .142	1 .515		2 .735	.013		
S.A	.. 653	.607	.298	1 .076	.001	.533	1. 877
S.B	1 .220	.568	.447	2 .146	.045	.943	1. 061
S.C	1 .156	.907	.361	1 .275	.000	.510	1. 959

a. Dependent Variable: grade

With regard to table above (Table 6), coefficient of variables in regression equation came out. By these coefficients equation can be written as below:

Grade (performance) = 4.142 + 0.653 S.A + 1.22 S.B + 1.156 S.C

Where: S.A: section A, S.B: section B, and S.C: section C

From this equation, it would be found out that section B in questionnaire has the biggest coefficient so it means that every unit increase in section B (S.B) leads to 1.22 unit increase in performance; moreover, every unit increase in section A (S.A) is along with 0.653 unit increase in grade, and finally every unit increase in section C (S.C) results in 1.156 unit increase in grade (performance). Since VIFs are less than 5, so it does not need to do stepwise method.

Table 7: weekend coefficient of variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Coefficients Co linearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	7.229	2.167		3.336	.007		
S.A	3.320	1.127	.796	2.946	.013	.668	1.497
S.B	1.574	1.144	.413	1.376	.196	.540	1.852
S.C	2.732	1.148	.832	2.381	.036	.399	2.507

a. Dependent Variable: grade

With regard to table above (Table7), equation below can be written:

Grade (performance) = 7.229 + 3.320 (S.A) + 1.574 (S.B) + 2.732 (S.C)

From this equation and table, it is apparent that S.A (section A) has largest coefficient among variables; therefore, this section has the most influence on grade (performance). After this variable, S.C (section C) is located on second rank. Last one is related to section B (S.B). for interpreting this numbers, it can be remarked that:

Every one unit increase in S.A can leads to 3.320 unit increase in Grade.

Every one unit increase in S.B can leads to 1.574 unit increase in Grade.

Every one unit increase in S.C can leads to 2.732 unit increase in Grade.

To sum up, in weekday classes, section B (S.B/Individual Factors) is the most important factor in students' performance, while in weekend classes, section A (S.A/Social Factors) does have a significant effect on it.

Conclusion and Discussion:

This paper examined the factors that affect MBA students' performance in Management & Cost Accounting Class at IBS of UTM. Regarding to Gender and Grade Frequency, the study findings show that the majority of the Weekday Students were female (67%) and meanwhile 29% of whole got A (same as B+), While 34% of Weekend Students' grade was B (interestingly they didn't have A+ at all!) and more than half of the class were Male. According to Weekday and Weekend's prospective, the study found that to Weekday Students the most important factor in students' performance is "Individual Factors", while the Weekend students believed in the significant impact of "Social Factors".

As it is conducted, weekday students who most of them were female got better marks than weekend students, majority Male, who were part-time student and had not enough time to concentrate more on studying. In addition, work experience of weekend students helped them in having this concept that a way to connect and communicate more effectively in the class, as a small society, is to create relationships between themselves and lecture as well. In their prospective, creating relationships can be considered as a significant factor in determining academic outcomes.

6.1 Recommendation:

Academic performance is an excellent measure of the transfer of knowledge in modern society. Some variables of interaction can be studied. The following points would be suggested by this paper's researcher and students' comments (based on the last open question of the questionnaire):

- A mixed approach of online and classroom pedagogies would be a good way in developing a unique, individualized course. The online–classroom blend reflects choices made by the instructor and reflects that professor's own skills and requirements (Zabriskle and McNabb, 2007).
- With the wide range of individual factors represented in MBA classrooms, it is worthwhile to investigate the factors that may contribute to aptitude for certain courses or types of courses.
- The fast pace of technological change is very exciting and very daunting at the same time. People constantly develop new ways of presenting instructional material, and educators should keep up with the changes. Instructors should learn to use new technologies, incorporate them into existing courses, and design new courses around those technologies.
- Interestingly kinds of relationships during studying may have the highest impact! For instance, romantic relationships may be a psychological barrier to an effective learning process.
- Research conducted by Kerssen-Griep, Hess, and Trees (2003) on learning motivation and interaction in school shows that student perception of instructional behaviour sustains their involvement in classroom.

Jackson, Weiss, Lundquist, and Hooper (2003) examine the degree to which cognitive motivation predicts academic performance. They point out that increased school activity may assist motivation. Paul and White (1990) examined extracurricular activity participation and academic achievement in a senior high school setting. They found that extracurricular activities and academic performance were highly correlated. They supported the hypothesis stated by Mynell (2004) more involvement in school activities means a better grade point average.

- Assembling a Student Association for each semester entry may have a pronounced effect on the academic performances in higher education. A member of this kind of association is expected to never being left alone to cope with situations such as studying times and working on other members' assignments, etc.

Limitation of study:

In spite of the results and evidence found, this study has several potential limitations which is necessary to mention. One of the main limitations or lacks is the absence of greater variety of factors which can have significant impact on students' performance. In addition the other concerns would be the questionnaire which has been designed by the author aimed at three general factors based on the objectives of this paper.

Keeping all this in mind, and in concordance with the limitations exposed and the results obtained, future lines of research should explore more deeply and more specifically on other variables. Factors, in one hand, related to lecturer such as his or her teaching style, attitude, and accent, etc. On the other hand, variables in association with the students like the type of goals pursued by, their competence in English, etc. Furthermore, some new factors such as romantic relationships, organizations and clubs, and sports activities which each of student would require and should acquire throughout their journey through the educational systems, could be studied as well. The fact that this study did not consider a wide variety of factors and samples, therefore, any stride toward a better understanding of the learning interface and consequently its impact on a better class performance would be suggested welcomed and embraced.

REFERENCES

Corporate Profile of IBS.

Diaz, A.L., 2003. Personal, Family and Academic Factors Affecting Low Achievement in Secondary School. Electronic Journal of Research Psychology and Psychopedagogy, 1(1): 43-66. ISSN: 1696-2095

Durr, C.J., 1997. Factors Affecting Student Performance in Principles of Macroeconomics Courses. (Southwest Missouri State University)

IBS & UTM 's website

Haahr, J.H., 2005. Explaining Student Performance Evidence from the international PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS surveys.

Jackson, T., K.E. Weiss, J.J. Lundquist & D. Hooper, 2003. The impact of hope, procrastination, and social activity on academic performance of midwestern college student. Education, 124(2): 310-320.

Keirsey, D. and M. Bates, 1978. Please understand me: Character and temperament types (3rd ed.). Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis.

Keith, L., Whittingham, 2006. Impact of Personality on Academic Performance of MBA Students: Qualitative Versus Quantitative Courses. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*.4(2). Printed in the U.S.A.

Kerssen-Griep, J., J. Hess and A. Trees, 2003. Sustaining the desire to learn: Dimensions of perceived instructional facework related to student involvement and motivation to learn. Western Journal of Communication 67: 357-381.

Martin, M.L., 2004. Involvement in College Clubs and Organizations and Its Relationship to Academic Performance. *National Undergraduate Research Clearinghouse 7*. Available: http://www.webclearinghouse.net/volume/7/MARTIN-Involvemen.php

Paul, E.L. and K.M. White, 1990. The development of intimate relationships in late adolescence. Adolescence., 24: 375-400.

Schneider, M., 2002. Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities: 16-17.

Wright, J.J., 1967. Reported personal stress sources and adjustment of entering freshmen. *Journal of Counseling Psychology.,* 14(4): 371-373.

Zabriskie, F.B. and D.E. McNabb, 2007. E-hancing the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Managerial Accounting Course. Journal of Education for Business, 232.