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Challenges of Teaching First-Year Students at Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract

It is a known fact that coming to the university environment for the first time can be frightening, and this experience comes with a mixed-bag of reactions for most of these first-year students. Undoubtedly, how they react to this new environment, generally impacts on their academic and social adaptation at these institutions. Therefore, the intention of this article is to look at some of the common challenges which these students (with special reference to CUT, FS) are confronted with. Some vital coping strategies are also recommended for especially novice lecturers to be able to effectively manage this challenge posed by these new entrants.

Keywords: Students, First-years, Performance, Teaching challenges, Higher learning institutions

1. Introduction

It is being said that, for many years in South African Higher Education, it was believed that only those who 'fit' higher education would eventually be successful. Those students who possess the talents and skill to 'survive' would succeed and the others would consider other educational possibilities (Eiselen and Geyser 2003; Killen, Marais and Loedolff 2003; Bitzer 2005). Shertzer & Stone (1971) argue that people generally feel emotionally less secure in a new or strange environment. Bojuwole (2002) adds that this is particularly the case with students just coming to the university environment for the first time and becoming members of an institution. Such newly admitted students may feel confused, tense, threatened, anxious, and even helpless (Hamblin, 1989). Transition from a high school to a university environment has the potential to become a daunting task for first-year students. The demands on the lecturer for achieving success with this group of students, is equally as challenging. However, it is essential to note that studies conducted have established that students change substantially over the course of their undergraduate academic experience (Kennedy, Shackle & Kehrhahn, 2000; Lourens & Smit, 2003) and the most dramatic changes occur during their first year of study (Muffo, Dickey & Bodo, 1999).

The findings of Kariuki (2006) on many of the general problems confronting university students, revealed that: (i) understanding the English used in a textbook; (ii) understanding their academic work; (iii) expressing themselves clearly in English; (iv) making friends; (v) and taking notes in class were the five most important aspects identified by the students regarding their university education. Conversely, Downs (2005) reports that following feedback from first year lecturers, students have poor skills in the following areas: summarising, identifying key concepts, discussion, essay writing and comprehension. He went further to suggest that the students have opted for surface level learning, and consequently, the curriculum does not create meaning for them. It might follow that if students have a poor background as well as time pressures, they may not have a choice. He concludes that other studies concerning assessment of student achievement revealed that many students fail to develop effective thinking and problem solving skills.

2. Learning Expectations in the Higher Education Context

In the university context, students face what Kitchener (1983) and Churchman (1971) respectively refer to as ill-structured problems or dialectical problems. These are problems for which there is no single, unequivocal solution

which can be determined at the present moment by employing a particular decision-making procedure. Ill-structured problems are typical of the type of problems where there is seldom a choice to students. Rather, students are confronted with opposing or contradictory evidence and opinion which requires that they consider alternative arguments, seek out new evidence and evaluate the reliability of data and sources of information. Kitchener (1983) distinguishes these problems from puzzles, which are well-structured problems with only one correct final solution, which can be guaranteed by using a specific known and effective procedure or formula.

Fisher (1995) argues that students need to acquire not only the explicit knowledge (as in the content of the curriculum) but also the tacit knowledge (for example, learning to understand and interpret the values, beliefs or social practices of a particular community of scholars). Starfield (1994) similarly argues that, other than focusing on mere content of the curriculum, other levels of knowledge, what forms of explanation and argument are allowable and how new knowledge is produced should also be part of the curricula. In conceptualizing courses, Amos and Quinn (1997) consequently argue that less emphasis should be placed on the content students are required to learn and more on the skills needed for coping academically.

3. Typical Academic Challenges for Students

3.1 First Year Students

A first year student needs support through the transitory process in a series of particular issues (Angelo & Cross, 1993):

a) First year students require new skills

A major concern is to assist first year students to become familiar with what it means to be a self-managed, independent learner. Time management is particularly difficult for students to learn. School leavers are usually more familiar with the day to day involvement of parents and staff who may also take on an inspectorial role. Those coming from the workforce will also have their own particular challenges when they lose the structure of work and daily deadlines and demands. Many students struggle to understand the need for detailed referencing and unimpassioned expression of ideas.

b) First year students need to adopt a new style of learning

In professions-based awards there are often outside pressures from professional associations that tend to overload curriculum content at the expense of the time being spent on learning processes. As a result, there is a risk of teaching becoming content driven, rather than learning driven. The first year can be the hardest for students because there is a need for students to learn a vast range of basic concepts in a number of new fields or disciplines before they can engage with their application to their chosen profession. At first these concepts often do not appear to have any practical application. It is very difficult for students to engage intentionally in this kind of learning if they do not understand the importance as well as the relevance, for future learning and work. First year students often confuse fact and example, and require constant explanation of what materials must be retained post-lecture and studied in detail.

c) First year students have a diversity of needs, experiences and backgrounds

Focusing on students' learning needs rather than curriculum content is further complicated by the diversity of needs that exist in the classroom (age, prior experience, cultural norms, ability, etc.) In the first year there are very few assumptions that lecturers can make about common experiences and understandings. All assumptions about knowledge, understanding, experiences, values and capability need to be verified.

d) First year students show high drop-out and failure rates

In any analysis of first year failure rates it is important to recognise that there are multiple causes of failure. In some cases students enroll for reasons other than interest and personal choice. Early evidence of the risk of failure is when students fail to submit work. In other instances some students work for a mere pass rather than to learn. These factors are not readily apparent in grade distributions.

e) First year students display poor class participation

Some students do not participate by talking in lectures and tutorials due to a fear of being perceived as ignorant. Other students dominate conversations. There is also a concern that where there is a heavy reliance on lectures in the first year, there is a general decline in the attendance of lectures as the course progresses.

f) First year students are typically under prepared

Students fail to understand the depth of preparation that is required for participation in university courses and attend tutorials without having worked through pre-readings. Because of this tutorials frequently revert to mini-lectures rather than active sessions. Students who have done the preparation can then become discouraged from doing so.

3.2 General Academic Challenges for Students

Human beings possess an acquired need to express their innate, biologically ordained competence, called “competence motive” (Hall 1993, 1994). The attainment of human competence is a natural part of the life process and is what ensures

the survival of the species. Therefore, rather than assume students are not intellectually capable of meeting the demands of the university environment, one should consider that such individuals are making use of the incorrect cognitive processes (Craig, 1998). Understanding student learning difficulties within the higher education context, students must be seen as abstract thinkers who have the ability to engage in, benefit from and master formal education but, at the same time, make use of the incorrect cognitive process when grappling with the typically ill-structured problems encountered in the various academic disciplines at higher education level.

Scott (1994) adds that if the complex student learning difficulties in higher education are to be addressed effectively, it is clear that academic development work is required. Such academic development needs to be aimed at preparing all students to mobilise the cognitive process required for success within each of the various academic disciplines. All students have the capabilities to fulfill the demands of university tasks, but, in some cases, the learning-teaching situation does not elicit these competencies and/or the desired performance level (Craig, 1989). Academic development needs to be more than growth, it is about growth and change. Academic development is essentially concerned with the processes of change in teaching and learning in higher education.

Academic development "no longer becomes a problem that lies within a particular group or groups of students, but is a process in which a range of actors in different situations share responsibility for growing into academic life" (Bulman, 1997:09; Van der Riet, Gilbert, Kelly & Fischer, 1996). There is consequently a need to develop academic literacy, not as an adjunct "skill", but by and through engagement with learning in the mainstream academic disciplines themselves (Langer, 1987; Boughey, 1994) aimed at preparing all students to deal with the set of competencies required at the tertiary education level.

4. Contemporary Didactical Approaches to Meet the Needs of the New "Millennial Student"

Newton as cited by Angelo & Cross (1993) indicated that when attempting to have an influence on the "millennial student" enrolling at higher institutions, the following needs to be taken into account:

Faculty and staff may need to recognise that students are already different in their attitudes and behaviour as a result of the social and technological revolution.

A campus must still offer deliberate classroom and out-of-class opportunities in order for student personal awareness and exploration to take place.

The information revolution has created the need to reduce pressure on students to accumulate a personal knowledge base and, instead, emphasise the development of process tools for information retrieval.

Students need to have skills to manage their daily life.

Campuses need to provide opportunities for students to explore the meaning and purpose of their life activity.

Faculty and staff need to understand, nourish and find ways to influence the peer culture.

Understand and utilise how students are affected by what they perceive as the normative behaviour of their peers in the social environment.

Finally, it is important for all educators, including both faculty and staff, to recognise how one models what is important and valued as higher learning to students.

In a holistic approach in which the individuality of each learner is foremost, Kruger (1999) has suggested that the learning process should not be a temporary endeavour, but that it should span a lifetime, with learners involved in the process as unique, whole beings. This significant role played by various human dimensions (for example, body, spirit, perpetual activities, social processes and environment) has been widely recognised. They have increasingly been highlighted by various researchers in devising more comprehensive theories of learning (Illeris, 2003; Bitzer, 2005).

The implication for institutions is that educators must attend to the non-cognitive as well as cognitive characteristics of students in order to create diverse, stimulating environments that lead to powerful learning experiences and maximise opportunities for holistic learning. Therefore, researchers should assess students' different kinds of existing knowledge and aptitudes, personality traits, expectations, as well as their interest and participation in specific activities, both academic and otherwise, when they register for higher education (Bitzer, 2005).

5. Problem Statement and Aim of the Study

Student performance at institutions of higher learning is generally attributable to a range of diverse reasons, which are both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. More often than not, teaching first-year students pose more challenges than when teaching senior students. Time-management, self-discipline and independence are some of the traits most of them battle to master. Straus & Volkwein (2002) and Lourens & Smit (2003) insists that while the Higher Education literature provides an exhaustive range of theories about the reasons for students leaving, as well as proposals for positive intervention, it remains critical for administrators to understand the unique combination of factors contributing to student performance and attrition at their institutions, and how to best assist lecturers to deal with them.

At the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Central University of Technology, schools/departments are expected to perform and uphold a certain performance standard. This standard is checked regularly after every examination. Indications from most schools seem to suggest that the cause for most deviations from the agreed standard is attributable to mainly first-year performance. It is against this background that this article came about.

6. Research Design and Sampling

The method used was of a quantitative nature and followed a descriptive and exploratory research design, using a survey to collect the data. The survey instrument was developed by the researcher and was in the form of a questionnaire comprising of 15 closed-ended items, and one open-ended question. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A: demographic information; Section B: factual items as well as attitudinal and perception items, divided between (i) lecturers and (ii) students' opinions on the topic. A four-point Likert rating scale was used to measure the responses to the items on the questionnaire in Section B, and the responses varied from "a very great extent = (4)" to "no extent = (1)"

The issues investigated were obstacles encountered or perceived to be faced by these students during university education, and the following variables were identified as predictors of their performance: language of instruction; diverse academic competency levels in a class; listening skills; active participation in class; class attendance; ability to work independently; self discipline; responsibility; commitment; preparation for class; health and HIV/Aids; support from home; peer pressure; financial issues; and class sizes.

6.1 Selection of respondents

Firstly, due to time constraints, a purposeful or non-probability sampling strategy was used whereby all full-time students at a research university of technology currently in their first-year of training to become teachers, were selected for this study. Students enrolled for the module GSD10AS (General Subject Didactics). The selection was based primarily on the fact that this module, GSD10AS, is a compulsory module for all first-year students who enrolled for any of the 4 year undergraduate B.Ed(FET): Specialisation programmes, and would therefore, at least be a fair and adequate reflection of the Teacher Training student population at the university. The student response rate was 100% (n=154), and this can be ascribed to the fact that the questionnaires were administered just after one of their written assessment in this module.

Secondly, a similar approach was followed to select a total number of 75% (n=21) of lecturers from the four schools namely: Education; Tourism; Public Management; and School for Entrepreneurship and Business Development, all located within the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Central University of Technology. All those selected were lecturing the first-year students within their respective Schools. Because the study was conducted on such a relative small scale (n=154, students) and (n=21, lecturers) over a limited time and in a limited context, this study does not attempt to claim any generalisation of its findings, but provides only indications on trends and tendencies as perceived and reported by both lecturers and students.

6.2 Data collection and analysis

The data derived from Sections A & B, demographic, factual and attitudinal information of the questionnaire: Student and lecturer surveys on perceptions and attitudes regarding challenges of teaching first-year, was coded and recorded on the SAS® (SAS Institute Inc., 2004) database. This is also where all statistical calculations were carried out. A frequency analysis was done using the data obtained from Section A to obtain a demographic profile of both the student and lecturer sample.

6.3 Demographic profile

The demographic profile of the respondents included their age, gender, race and the academic programmes for which they had registered. The student sample (n=154) and lecturers (n=21) are shown as frequencies and percentages in Table 1. The findings reveal that three percent of lecturers involved were in possession of doctoral degrees, 58% had mastered degrees and 39% had B.Tech/Hons degrees. All lecturers had the required qualifications to teach at an institution of higher learning. Their lecturing experience at this institution varies from minimum 3,6 to maximum 18 years.

Table 1 indicates on the one hand, that majority of the first-year students are still relatively young, between the ages of 15-25, and the numbers are dominated by females. Evidently, black students are in a majority amongst the sample population. On the other hand, majority of the lecturers are divided into two categories, namely: those approaching their middle-age (46%) and others already in their prime (31%). Male lecturers dominated (58%), with whites marginally higher in terms of representivity.

Conclusion

From this data in Table 1, it can be safely inferred that given the age of the majority of the students, the dependence syndrome might still be dominant amongst them, which requires carefully thought-out intervention strategies to assist

them in making such a shift from dependency to self-reliance in both their academic and social life. Similarly, it is evident that majority of lecturers are still young and inexperienced. Qualification alone sometimes cannot "do the trick", a certain degree of maturity is essential for one to understand the behaviour of students at different stages of their development, and develop and apply appropriate intervention strategies to assist them to achieve success.

7. Increasing the Chance of Student'S Academic Success

The challenge of ensuring student success requires an understanding of the nature of learning itself. Learning is a relatively permanent change in knowledge or behaviour that results from practice or experience (George & Jones, 2002). Amongst the vast amount of research done under the topic of learning, two of the most prominent theories are those of Skinner's (1969) operant conditioning and Bandura's (1977) social learning, both of which this article intends to explore. According to Skinner (1969), operant conditioning is learning that takes place when the learner recognises the connection between a behaviour and its consequences. For example, a learner who knows that by studying hard throughout the year, he/she will receive good grades, and will not be overburdened during the final weeks towards examinations (George & Jones, 2002).

Operant Conditioning theory is based on the following components: Firstly, antecedents, which is anything that tells students about desired and undesired behaviours and their consequences, such as instructions, rules, goals and advice from other fellow students. Secondly, behaviours, which can either be desired organisational behaviour (for example, hard work throughout the year) or undesired organisational behaviour (bunking work, absenteeism from classes, etc.). Thirdly, consequences of behaviour, which might lead to either positive reinforcement, that is, administering positive consequences to students who perform the desired behaviour, (such as verbal praise, appointing him/her as class leader, or tutor) or (ii) negative reinforcement, that is, removing negative consequences when students perform the desired behaviour, for example, if a student lives away from home and his/her parents complain that s/he does not call home more often. By calling home, s/he is able to avoid the negative consequence of his/her parents' complaints. Third component is extinction, that is, removing whatever is currently reinforcing the behaviour. If a lecturer wishes to decrease the probability that an undesired behaviour will occur, s/he first needs to determine what is currently reinforcing the behaviour and then remove the source of reinforcement. Finally, punishment, that is, administering negative consequences to students who perform the undesired behaviour. Such as punishing destructive behaviour during the lesson.

7.1 The social learning theory

Bandura (1977) argues that any attempt to understand how people learn must take into account the impact on learning not only of reinforcement and punishment, but also of a person's feelings and thoughts. Social learning theory acknowledges the importance of the person in the learning process by taking cognitive processes into account. This theory is based on the following assumptions (George & Jones, 2002):

The information that impacts on what people learn comes from the school/university, its members, and the school/university situation, from observing others, from the student's past attainments and physiological states, and so on. The learner then cognitively processes this information, which can happen in three various ways, namely: (i) vicarious learning – occurs when the learner observes and imitates a model; (ii) self-control – is evident when the learner learns on his or her own by setting a goal and engaging in self-reinforcement when the goal is reached; and (iii) self-efficacy – leads the learner to believe he or she can perform successfully. Various cognitive processes such as attention, perception and memory are involved in vicarious learning. Clearly a substantial amount of the learning that takes place at institutions of learning occurs vicariously. Finally, the behaviour change, this will manifests itself in the conduct displayed by the student, in this case towards both his/her academic work and university life in general.

8. Discussion on the Findings of the Study

Table 2 indicates that lecturers perceive (i) responsibility; (ii) commitment; and (iii) preparation for class as very central to the success or failure of first-year students. Evidently, the expectation from lecturers is that, because these factors emanate from the student himself/herself, a certain level of maturity must have been acquired by these students to comprehend the impact, especially regarding these three factors. Undoubtedly, very few of first-year students understand and comply with these requirements. One academic remarked that "the struggling students are the ones who fail to attend SI (i.e special instruction) sessions, so how will they pass or cope with the amount of work, if they are not willing to attend extra tuition offered to them?". Similarly, another academic echoed the same sentiments, that "normally students that excel display a huge amount of commitment, hardwork and self-discipline, the opposite is also true". It is surprising that issues such as 'class sizes' and 'peer pressure' are ranked very low by academics, despite the fact that they are arguably the two most common complaints one often hear from academics.

Table 3 reveals that students perceive (i) self-discipline; (ii) ability to work independently; and (iii) support from home as the most significant determinants of their academic success. Interestingly, the three factors do not vary significantly to the ones identified by the lecturers in table 1 above, they are both intrinsic factors, except for support from home

which is extrinsic in nature. From the open-ended question, one student remarked that "some lecturers are unreasonable, they simply give us lots of work and do not understand that we do not have money to buy textbooks some of us". Another one said "we need proper orientation and guidance so that we are able to balance our social life and academic work, some of us are labelled 'academic giants but social dwarfs".

Notwithstanding these complaints, it is quite pleasing to note that the students, placed a high premium on the role they had to play towards their own success, an acknowledgement that their academic success or failure primarily lies in their own hands. Their plea of support and guidance surely needs to be heeded by academics.

From Table 4, it is evident that the t-test indicates that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of students and lecturers in the following cases, namely: (i) support from home; (ii) language of instruction; and (iii) peer pressure. In the case of (i) and (ii), students feel the factors are significantly more important that the lecturers do, and in 3, the lecturers perceive the factor as more important. It is not surprising that students feel support from home to be highly significant. Most of them come from places far from their chosen institution, venturing into the unknown, without friends or relatives. The experience for the very first weeks and months can be a daunting and frightening experience. Language of instruction as well as peer pressure can have adverse effects if lecturers fail to make a conscious and concerted effort to effectively manage them.

9. Summary and Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the first year at university is a time of social and academic transition for most students and their early experiences are critical to their academic success and perseverance in student life. Teaching first year students can also be more demanding on the staff member involved due to the large class sizes, coordination difficulties, extra planning and feedback requirements, amongst other issues (Newton, 2000:08).

Evidently, from this study, most of the first-year students view language of instruction; volume of work; ability to manage time; level of independence and support especially from home, as the most crucial areas that impact on their performance. On the other hand, lecturers identified lack of responsibility; commitment and poor preparation for class as the most key areas to the success of their academic adventure. It stands to reason, therefore, that the success of a lecturer is dependant largely upon the willingness and ability of a student to succeed. It is of paramount importance to understand that lecturers need not only master the subject matter, but also comprehend that the way students learn is a vital ingredient. How to help them develop not only their cognitive skills, such as applying; analyzing; synthesizing and evaluating information (Bloom's 1956) higher order cognitive skills), but also empathy, caring and support equally requires a special skill from a lecturer. A holistic approach, inclusive of student support service or academic development, has to form an integral part of this venture for first-year student to succeed. Quite a daunting task for academics if proper mechanism are not put in place timeously and proactively.

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List of Tables/Figures:

First-year students (n=154)				First-year lecturers (n=21)		
Characteristic	Group	N	%	Group	N	%
Age	15 – 20 21 – 25 26 – 30 31 – 35 an older	61 82 11 0	40% 53% 7% 0	25 – 30 31 – 40 41 – 50 51 and older	2 10 6 3	8% 46% 31% 15%
Gender	Male Female	63 91	41% 59%	Male Female	12 9	58% 42%
Race	Black White Other	132 17 5	86% 11% 3%	Black White Other	10 11 0	47% 53% 0
Programme	EMS Natural Sciences Technology/Technical Computer Science	42 57 26 29	27% 37% 17% 19%	Education SEBO Hotel School P. Management	9 5 4 3	46% 23% 18% 13%

Table 1. Demographic profile of 1st year students and their lecturers

	A very great extent	A noticeable extent	Some extent	No extent	
Factors	4	3	2	1	1 and 2
Responsibility	61.9%	23.8%	9.5%	4.8%	85.7%
Commitment	61.9%	23.8%	9.5%	4.8%	85.7%
Preparation for class	57.1%	33.3%	4.8%	4.8%	90.5%
Self discipline	52.4%	38.1%	4.8%	4.8%	90.5%
Class attendance	47.6%	28.6%	23.8%	0.0%	76.2%
Listening skills	42.9%	33.3%	14.3%	9.5%	76.2%
Diverse academic competency levels in a class	38.1%	33.3%	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%
Financial issues	35.0%	40.0%	20.0%	5.0%	75.0%
Ability to work independently	33.3%	52.4%	9.5%	4.8%	85.7%
Active participation in class	33.3%	38.1%	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%
Class sizes	23.8%	23.8%	42.9%	9.5%	47.6%
Language of instruction	19.0%	38.1%	33.3%	9.5%	57.1%
Peer pressure	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%
Support from home	5.0%	60.0%	35.0%	0.0%	65.0%
Health and HIV/Aids	0.0%	16.7%	61.1%	22.2%	16.7%

Table 2. Staff perceptions of factors influencing first year student performance

	A very great extent	A notice-able extent	Some extent	No extent
Factors	1	2	3	4
Self discipline	67.5%	15.0%	12.5%	5.0%
Ability to work independently	58.5%	26.8%	12.2%	2.4%
Support from home	55.0%	25.0%	15.0%	5.0%
Class attendance	50.0%	22.5%	20.0%	7.5%
Language of instruction	48.8%	34.1%	9.8%	7.3%
Responsibility	39.0%	43.9%	12.2%	4.9%
Preparation for class	35.0%	40.0%	15.0%	10.0%
Commitment	34.1%	48.8%	12.2%	4.9%
Listening skills	31.7%	51.2%	14.6%	2.4%
Class sizes	30.0%	27.5%	30.0%	12.5%
Diverse academic competency levels in a class	29.3%	61.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Financial issues	23.1%	28.2%	23.1%	25.6%
Health and HIV/Aids	22.5%	17.5%	20.0%	40.0%
Active participation in class	19.5%	58.5%	19.5%	2.4%
Peer pressure	15.0%	35.0%	20.0%	30.0%

Table 3. Student perceptions of factors influencing their performance

Factors	Lecturers Mean	Students Mean	P(T<=t)
Support from home	2.60	1.70	0.0094
Language of instruction	2.33	1.76	0.0220
Peer pressure	2.10	2.65	0.0363
Financial issues	1.95	2.51	0.0559
Preparation for class	1.57	2.00	0.0866
Commitment	1.57	1.88	0.1748
Ability to work independently	1.86	1.59	0.2111
Responsibility	1.57	1.83	0.2606
Health and HIV/Aids	3.06	2.78	0.3588
Active participation in class	1.95	2.05	0.6291
Class sizes	2.38	2.25	0.6330
Class attendance	1.76	1.85	0.7312
Self discipline	1.62	1.55	0.7699
Diverse academic competency levels in a class	1.90	1.85	0.8038
Listening skills	1.90	1.88	0.9059

Table 4. T-test comparison – Lecturers and students

Factors	Lecturers Mean	Students Mean	P(T<=t)
Support from home	2.60	1.70	0.0094
Language of instruction	2.33	1.76	0.0220
Peer pressure	2.10	2.65	0.0363
Financial issues	1.95	2.51	0.0559
Preparation for class	1.57	2.00	0.0866
Commitment	1.57	1.88	0.1748
Ability to work independently	1.86	1.59	0.2111
Responsibility	1.57	1.83	0.2606
Health and HIV/Aids	3.06	2.78	0.3588
Active participation in class	1.95	2.05	0.6291
Class sizes	2.38	2.25	0.6330
Class attendance	1.76	1.85	0.7312
Self discipline	1.62	1.55	0.7699
Diverse academic competency levels in a class	1.90	1.85	0.8038
Listening skills	1.90	1.88	0.9059