

# Assessment on Factors that Made Students' to Miss Tutorial Sessions

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

Tutorials are constructivist learning environments, in which the search for solutions to a problem that is ill-structured (in the sense that it is messy, like real-world problems) leads to complex reasoning, including analogy, induction, deduction, hypothesis rationale and prediction. In tutorials, students construct knowledge and learn to work collaboratively while interacting with one another in their search for solutions to a pedagogically modeled course issue based on departments (Garí & Iputo, 2015).

Gari and Iputo have shown the factors that influence tutorials by categorizing the factors into four learning chunks. These are the social dimension, motivational dimension, cognitive and self-directed learning. These dimensions are so influential especially for tutorial implantation and effectiveness. In their study on tutorial group performance at Walter Sisulu University, it was shown that tutorial group performance is positively influenced more by motivational and cognitive factors than by social and self-directed learning factors. Social dimensions should be prioritized when training tutors and self-directed learning emphasized for students. The poor productivity of extra-tutorial group discussions suggests the need for a critical evaluation of this activity (Garí & Iputo, 2015). But in this study the emphasis is on factors that affect students' attendance on tutorials.

Harrison, Sharma, Mendez and O'Byrne, (2005) in their study about the correlation between student attendance at optional tutorials and performance as measured by the final grade in the course; wherein they made the two courses were studied: and a large course in Physics for the Life Sciences and a somewhat smaller liberal arts course in Physics without Mathematics. For

both courses, students who attended all or most tutorials received a mean final mark in the course just over a full letter grade higher than students who attended none or very few tutorials. They discuss the difficulties in untangling cause and effect in the correlation of these two factors.

Lack of interest on the part of students to attend tutorial classes were the push to carry out this study.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

As stated in Garí and Iputo, (2015) Keyton distinguished five characteristics that define a group and determine its functioning: size, common goals, member interdependence, group structure, and identity. Slavin divided the complex interactions characterizing collaborative learning environments into the following dimensions: motivational, social and cognitive. Tutorial group productivity depends on the individual's self-directed preparation. The two items that explored students' strategies for organizing and implementing their self-directed learning (SDL) indicated that a substantial proportion of students studied only the topics in which they would be expected to actively participate in the tutorial. Individual assignment of specific topics decreases cognitive load and produces "experts" with narrower cognitive scope to apply to case comprehension and, consequently, to actively participate in co-construction of knowledge. The tutor's skills in content facilitation compensate for students' uncertainty about how thoroughly a topic should be studied by offering a holistic vision achieved by understanding the patient and the patient's problem. Advancing in construction of knowledge about a problem over the three weekly sessions is not linked to a single discipline, but rather contributes to an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, the group's strategy for problem-solving and moving ahead in each problem through various disciplines determines SDL organization and implementation.

It would be worth exploring in more depth the reasons these groups are unproductive and ways they could be reinforced as a learning tool. Tutorial group work is reinforced more by

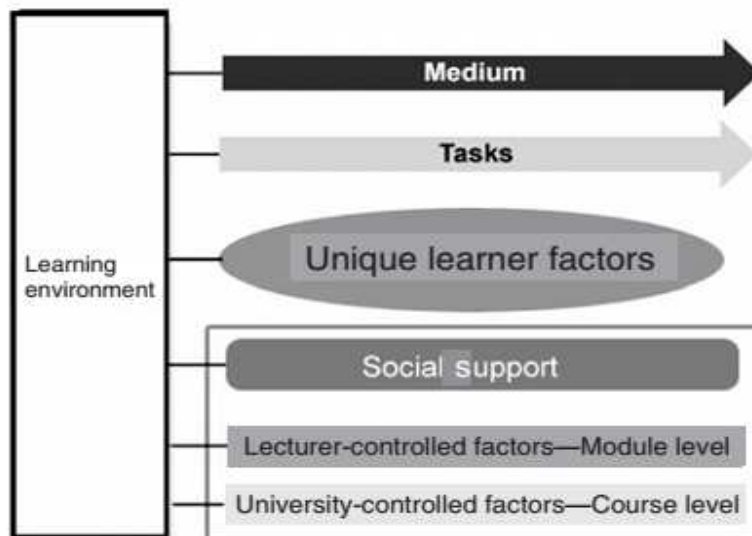
motivational and cognitive factors than by social and SDL<sup>1</sup> factors. Skills for managing social aspects of the tutorials should be included in tutor training, with particular emphasis on systematic practice of group performance feedback. Students should receive more in-depth training in SDL strategies, and SDL analysis should be included in group feedback sessions. Poor productivity of study groups outside tutorials suggests the need for their assessment and probable redesign.

A recent trend in higher education is to create and provide online access to course materials. Over the past two decades academics and institutes of higher education have been diversifying their delivery of instruction through new Internet media such as learning management systems, asynchronous distance learning, and online classrooms amongst a myriad of other burgeoning educational technologies. This combination of traditional face-to-face lectures or tutorials, and web-based course content is better known as “blended learning,” purporting to *blend* the best aspects of real and virtual environments. Many universities have invested in architectures and platforms to support their teaching staff in delivering material to students in a blended manner. Other institutions have adopted a lecturer-driven approach, whereby teaching staff are left to their own devices to supplement their lectures and tutorials with online material, hosted via their own web servers and typically open source, freeware software, or basic web pages. A module web site provided course details, additional readings, and supplementary links. Employing multiple teaching methods simultaneously is a form of blended learning (Saunders & Werner, 2003). Alternative instructional resources can stimulate positive effects on accounting students’ learning experiences, according to Rebele *et al.*, (1998). Furthermore, instructional innovations are desirable to develop accounting students’ IT competencies (Albrecht & Sack, 2000). Support through peer encouragement, perceived tutor and lecturer support were crucial in predicting the students’ motivation to use the ICT<sup>2</sup> supports provided in this course. The peer group was a major influence in determining whether or not students attended the evening laboratory tutorial sessions, and therefore, subsequently attempt the optional excel based case study task for 10% of the modules total marks (Concannon, Flynn, & Campbell, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> SDL – Self Direct Learning

<sup>2</sup> ICT – Information Communication Technology



The selection of courses was based on course level and use of online tools in the course curriculum. Students in foundation level and middle to upper level undergraduate and graduate courses were sought, based on the rationale that they would likely have had previous exposure to online learning and thus provide informed data on its efficacy in their learning (students are offered a non-mandatory orientation workshop on how to use online learning platforms prior to commencing studies. An interesting finding was the inverse relationship between positive student perceptions of using computers and their degree of interaction with others. Students were most comfortable, and found the most purpose for using computers and the Internet, for independent work such as submitting assignments, conducting searches, and retrieving course content. Students' comfort levels decreased when use involved communicating via email and a further decrease was noted when use involved communicating via discussion boards and chat rooms. Collaborating in open forums, and in particular via asynchronous mediums such as discussion boards, has been widely accepted as a positive avenue for engaging in deeper understanding (Harasim, 1990) and knowledge building (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996). Of utmost necessity in such environments is participant contribution. The findings in this investigation point to the conclusion that students are not enthusiastic about contributing publicly online. There are numerous reasons as to why such feelings exist. One is likely the absence of community, as argued by Brown & Duguid (1996). They suggest that whilst open and distance learning provides access to information, it denies access to community such as a physical campus and face-to-face communication, characteristics that students expect

from past experiences in tertiary education, or that draws prospective students to tertiary education. The structure of its courses can be equated to hybrids found in conventional and distance education, offering face-to-face interaction and instruction coupled with independent learning that occurs separately from the physical institution. Thus the framework for community as suggested by Brown & Duguid (1996), although it is arguable from the existing data, that this framework is not easily transferable to online learning. Two design features for strengthening community online is structure and purpose. (Zhang, Perris, & Yeung, 2005).

### 1.3. Significance

This study is vital for further intervention to help students' learning. In addition, it is helpful to strive for delivery of quality education.

### 1.4. Objectives

The general objective of this study is to identify the reasons for why students do not attend tutorials.

The specific objectives are:

- ☞ To identify time and information factors for missing tutorials.
- ☞ To distinguish students' personal factors that made them to miss tutorials.
- ☞ To investigate interest and perception of students towards tutorials.

### 1.5. Research Questions

The following research questions were the major themes through which the research was led.

- ☞ Why do not students attend English tutorial sessions?
- ☞ Is self-direct learning the reason for missing tutorials?
- ☞ Do students believe that tutorial helps to enhance academic performance?

### 1.6. Delimitation

The scope of this research is on second year students i.e. 2007 batch from Accounting department of St. Mary's University.

### 1.7. Limitation

Gender difference and academic background or earlier experiences in academic competencies were not treated as variables though they may have their influence and/or contribution.

### 1.8. Operational Definition

Tutorial: additional support for students in addition to the formal learning-teaching process.

Factors: justified reasons for missing tutorial sessions

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Population and Sampling

The study area is St. Mary's University. The population of the study refers to all second year accounting students in the university. The respondents from the population were selected by using quota sampling with the intention that class representatives are considered to be part of the sample.

### 2.2. Instruments

Likert type questionnaire with five scales with ten items was used to gather data from respondents. Ten items were developed by the researchers based on the review of the related literature.

#### 2.2.1. Construction

The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers as per the objectives and research questions. It had 10 items.

#### 2.2.2. Validating

Before administration, following the construction of the tool, language and content validity were cross-checked by concerned professionals. The comments given by the subject specialists were incorporated.

#### 2.2.3. Administration

The questionnaires were distributed to participants in a face to face manner that has indeed reduced ambiguity.

#### 2.2.4. Assembling and Coding

Following the completion of the items by the respondents, data collectors used tally mark to assemble the raw data/response. Then the raw data fed in to SPSS for further analysis.

### 2.3. Data Analysis Mechanisms

So as to analyze data, SPSS 20 was manipulated by encoding raw collected from respondents in a face to face distribution.

## III. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDING

In this section, data analysis of the finding was made. A questionnaire was distributed to second year students. The instrument consisted of ten items.

### 3.1. Background of Participants

All the respondents were second year students. They have had the opportunity to attend tutorial sessions or classes for the last two years. The researchers thus selected them as subjects for the study since they have firsthand experience when it comes to tutorial classes.

### 3.2. Perceived Benefits of Tutorial

**Table 3. 1: Benefit of Tutorials**

Tutorials are for the benefit of every student.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	3	2.6%
	Disagree	4	3.5%
	Neutral	17	14.8%
	Agree	24	20.9%
	Strongly Agree	67	58.3%
	Total	115	100%

As can be observed from Table 2, most respondents (78%) pointed out that tutorial classes are conducted for the benefit of students. Nevertheless, nearly 7% of the respondents disagreed with the notion that tutorials benefit learners. Of the respondents, 14.8% were neutral. From the above responses, most students know that tutorials are held for the benefit of learners.

### 3.3. Factors Influencing Tutorial Attendance

In this topic the factors are analyzed based on the respondents' response. To mention few; the course types, preferences, information gap, interest for tutorial, tutorial timing, perception and time availability are investigated.

**Table 3.2: Courses for Tutorial**



Mathematics and other quantitative courses are subjects for tutorial.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	5	4.3%
	Disagree	8	7%
	Neutral	17	14.8%
	Agree	40	34.8%
	Strongly Agree	45	39.1%
	Total	115	100%

Table 3 displays whether mathematics and other quantitative courses are subjects for tutorials, and more than a quarter of respondents (73.9%) agreed that mathematics and other quantitative courses are subjects for tutorials, but 11% of the respondents disagreed that mathematics and other quantitative courses are subjects for tutorials. 14.8% of the respondents were neutral. For the majority of students, quantitative courses are the type of subjects which require tutorials. Some students expressed their disagreement and neutral positions namely because they might have felt that other courses should also be incorporated in the tutorial session instead of focusing only on quantitative courses.

**Table 3.3: Preferences**

I prefer individual tasks and study than tutorial.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	11	9.6%
	Disagree	23	20%
	Neutral	29	25.2%
	Agree	39	33.9%
	Strongly Agree	13	11.3%
	Total	115	100%

Students were asked whether they prefer individual tasks or tutorials, and as can be seen in Table 3.4, 44.1% of the respondents opined that they prefer individual tasks and study to tutorial, where as 29.6 % opted for tutorial in place of individual tasks and study. 25.2 % were neutral.

From the above Table, one can infer that a significant number of students prefer individual tasks and study.

**Table 3.4: Information Gap**

Students miss tutorial due to information gap.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	7	6.1%
	Disagree	11	9.6%
	Neutral	29	25.2%
	Agree	42	36.5%
	Strongly Agree	26	22.6%
	Total	115	100%

Table 3.5 asks if students miss tutorials as a result of information gap. 59.1% of the respondents pointed out that they miss tutorials due to information gap; nonetheless, 15.7% of the respondents did not miss tutorials due to information gap. 25.2% of the respondents were neutral. Since close to 60% of the respondents attributed their non participation in the tutorial classes to information gap, there is a need to offer information about the university's tutorial program using different media.

**Table 3.5: Interest for Tutorials**

Students do not attend tutorials due to lack of interest.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	9	7.8%
	Disagree	14	12.2%
	Neutral	39	33.9%
	Agree	34	29.6%
	Strongly Agree	19	16.5%

	Total	115	100%
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Table 3.6 asks learners if it is due to lack of interest that they do not attend tutorial classes. While answering, 46.1% of the respondents expressed their agreement about lack of interest in attending tutorial classes. In other words, learners did not have interest in attending tutorial classes. On the other hand, 20% of the respondents failed to attend tutorial classes not because they lack interest but because due to other reasons. 33.9% of the respondents were neutral about the item. Close to half of the respondents are not interested in attending tutorial classes, and it implies that students have already felt that they do not benefit out of the tutorial sessions which require further qualitative investigation to know about the causes for forming such perception.

**Table 3.6: Tutorial Timing**

The time when tutorials are arranged matters for students' attendance.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	11	9.6%
	Disagree	17	14.8%
	Neutral	36	31.3%
	Agree	28	24.3%
	Strongly Agree	23	20%
	Total	115	100%

Table 3.7 indicates whether the timing of tutorial affects learners. From the respondents, 44% agreed that the timing can affect tutorials, and yet 24.4% reacted that tutorial timing did not affect them to attend tutorials. 31.3 % of the respondents were neutral regarding the timing aspect. Based on the above responses, one can safely conclude that there is a need to arrange tutorial classes during learners' free time to make them attend classes comfortably.

**Table 3.7: Perception of Tutorials**

Students miss tutorial since they think that nothing is different.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	17	14.8%
	Disagree	23	20%
	Neutral	35	30.4%
	Agree	24	20.9%
	Strongly Agree	16	13.9%
	Total	115	100%

Table 3.8 shows whether students miss tutorial since they think that nothing new can be gained out of it. 34.8% of the subjects made clear that they did not take part in the tutorial session since they assumed that they could get something new out of the tutorial; by contrast, 34% of the respondents disagreed that they missed tutorial classes since they think nothing new can be gained out of the program. 30.4% of the respondents did not agree or disagree to the item. From the above responses, it appears that the university should make learners aware about the merit of tutorial classes to make them take part in the tutorial sessions.

**Table 3.8: Tutorials and Academic Performance**

Tutorials are provided for academically poor students only		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	37	32.2%
	Disagree	23	20%
	Neutral	19	16.5%
	Agree	20	17.4%
	Strongly Agree	16	13.9%
	Total	115	100%

As can be seen from Table 3.9, 31.3% of the respondents claimed that tutorials should be offered for those students who are academically weak, but 52% of the respondents disagreed that

tutorials should not only be given to academically weak students alone. In other words, they feel that other students who are academically competent should benefit from tutorial programs. Of the total respondents 16.5% of the respondents were neutral.

**Table 3.9: Lack of Time**

Lack of extra time is cause for missing tutorial sessions.		Frequency	Percentage
Options	Strongly Disagree	10	8.7%
	Disagree	18	15.7%
	Neutral	33	28.7%
	Agree	28	24.3%
	Strongly Agree	26	22.6%
	Total	115	100.0%

Table 3.10 displays that if lack of time is the cause for missing tutorial classes. From the total respondents, 46.9% of the respondents claimed that they missed tutorial classes due to lack of time, where as 24.4% disagreed that they did not miss tutorial due to lack of time. 28.7% were neutral about the item. Nearly half of the students attributed their non participation to lack of time.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Conclusions

- Most students feel that tutorials are conducted for the benefit of learners.
- The majority of students pointed out those quantitative courses require tutorials.
- Students have mixed feelings about tutorials in such a way that some students prefer individual tasks and study, but others enjoy tutorials.
- More than half of the respondents claimed that they did not attend tutorials due you to information gap.

- Nearly half of the respondents made clear that they did not have interest to attend tutorials.
- For a significant number of students the timing of tutorials can affect their level of attendance.
- Respondents had mixed feeling about the benefit of tutorial. Some felt that they could not get something new out of tutorial program, where as others felt that they could get something new from tutorial sessions.
- More than half of the respondents made known that tutorials should be given to both high and low achievers.

## 4.2. Recommendations

The following ways for action are forwarded as per the finding from the survey.

- ☞ Students' wellness office should promote the advantage of tutorials to students.
- ☞ It is crucial to use students' union to enable students develop interest to tutorial programs.
- ☞ Reinforcing tutorial attendants could behaviorally retain them and let others join them.
- ☞ It would be preferable and convenient if there could be "tutorial unit" in students' union so that if need arises they can easily call for collaboration from teachers and/or departments.

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