

THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Learning environment has been the focus of considerable educational research over a long period of time. This research aims to investigate the influence of learning environment on students' learning experience at Tay Do University involving their mental and physical health as well as learning outcomes. The participants were 20 English-majored students at Tay Do University. The data were collected through six interview questions. The results showed that the students generally had positive feelings about their current learning environment. The learning environment at the university brought them a spiritual power which is an indispensable thing for their study. They did not have many problems in term of relationships and communication. Thanks to these mental benefits, the students could have good physical health and high learning outcomes.

Key words: Higher education, Learning environment, Learning experience

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a very complex process. One's general ability, emotions, previous experiences, social environment, and the culture of the community are variables that affect the process of learning. Moreover, researches on educational sciences have shown that the only way for learning to take place in the proper sense is to find an individual's learning style and arrange the learning environment accordingly. In designing the learning environment, it is vital to think about learner characteristics (learning styles, approaches, motivation, interests, etc.) in order to promote permanent and effective learning. Dwyer (1996) mentioned that learning environment and learning process should be designed not to enable students to learn in the same manner and at the same level, but rather should be designed by giving thought to students' existing learning styles.

The aim of this study is to examine the university students' opinions on the influence of learning environment on their learning experience.

Based on the previous literature, the research question that we addressed was: how does the learning environment influence students learning experience in higher education? As the quality of university students' learning environment may be positively associated with student learning and experience at universities, our findings can support academics and educational managers to

foster the development and improvement of learning environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions of learning environment

Learning environment is composed of some components that influence the student's learning. These components according to Balog (2018) include people, teaching materials, technical tools, and learning resources, curriculum, training, and instruction, and physical environment/learning space. The people are the individuals that affect the student directly or indirectly through connection or relationship which can contribute to students' growth and success in their career aspect. The teaching materials, technical tools, and learning resources are the teaching materials, highly advanced tools or others instructional resources that are aligned with the curriculum as a part of student learning support. The curriculum, training, and instruction are the core foundations of the learning process; they influence one another and play vital roles to facilitate the flow of knowledge and delivery of instructional content/curriculum. The physical environment/learning space refers to the physical setting of the learner's environment which should evoke positive responses and hold the interests of those who inhabit it (Balog,2018).

The teacher as an individual personality is an important factor in the learning environment.

They are key factors that create a favourable teaching-learning milieu that will make the instructional process easy, enthusiastically adaptable and useful (Usman, 2016). The way in which his personality interacts with the personalities of the pupils helps to determine the kind of behaviour which emerges from the learning situation (Brown, 2015). Environmental factors like classrooms, textbooks, equipment, school supplies, and other instructional materials etc. are the physical conditions needed for learning (Mondal, 2012).

2.2. The influence of learning environment on students' learning process

The learning environment has a great influence on the learning process of students. These influences come from many different perspectives but they will affect students in several ways. The learning environment has four influences on students such as academic performance, morale, friends, and health.

First, learning outcomes are the results of student learning. This will vary due to the student's learning process. There are many reasons for this result to change but the most common reason is that their learning process is influenced by the things around them, namely the learning environment. For example, you cannot study in a polluted, hot, noisy atmosphere, and for those reasons, the learning process will be severely affected.

Next, mental states influence learning invisibly. In the learning process, the mind plays an important role because it determines the learning attitude. We cannot study when there is so much pressure and anxiety. That will affect the absorption of the lesson and disturb the knowledge or will make us not interested in learning.

Third, friends have an impact on learning in many ways. While studying in class we will have friends to study with. These people are the determinants of learning attitudes or problems in the learning process. These will affect both positively and negatively. This will have a negative effect if these are bad friends. For example, you will feel that studying is not important because your friends only care about playing and not studying. You will have the thought of playing one more day and the next day you may be thinking that your friends do too. That will make you follow that.

Finally, health is a necessary condition for learning. Keeping your body in good health and full of energy will make your study session better than ever. That makes your study meals full of energy. You can go to school with a tired body. However, that only makes you more tired the next day. Classrooms full of students lying on your desk will make the atmosphere heavy. That will leave your teacher feeling frustrated and feeling negative. Teachers cannot teach if they just talk without questions and answers about the lesson. Lessons need to be exchanged for research and teaching.

Those are the things that a learning environment brings to the students. All of which have an impact on students' access to learning knowledge. When we control the above factors we will have a healthy environment. A healthy learning environment will bring many benefits.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 20 students at Tay Do University. There were 3 males and 17 females participated in the research. Their ages ranged from 20 to 22. All of them were sophomores, so they considered as at equal level.

3.2. Instruments

Interview questions were used as an instrument of this study to collect the participants' opinions about the influence of learning environment on their learning experience. The students were invited for face-to-face interviews. Each interview took place for about 30 minutes.

4. RESULTS

Students' responses collected in the interviews are presented in the following section.

4.1. Students' general feelings about the current learning environment

An analysis of students' responses showed that most of the students were generally appreciative of their learning environment. According to the students' feedback, it is understood that their current environment was designed in an entertaining way, including many different kinds of activities.

"With the learning environment at Tay Do University, I feel much interested in learning. I don't

feel tired when getting ready for school. It used to happen every morning when I went to high school before but not now.”(Male, English translation)

“It is fun. We learned better by all good English learning skills. I think the current learning environment is quite good for self-study, and it is easy to seek help when facing difficulties.”(Female, English translation)

4.2. The influence of learning environment on students’ mental and physical health

The result of the interviews with 20 students from Tay Do University showed that the learning environment at the university brought them a spiritual power which is an indispensable thing for their study.

“In general, I feel comfortable, optimistic and happy when studying in this learning environment. I just have a little pressure for the deadline in the exams.”(Female, English translation)

“I love this learning environment because my spirit is always comfortable. I feel excited with the learning activities in class. All of my teachers and friends are helpful.” (Female, English translation)

“I sometimes feel stressed, but most of the time I feel ok. I like studying in this nice learning environment.” (Male, English translation)

In addition, the students also stated that they did not have many problems in term of relationships and communication.

“I also don’t have many relationships in the university environment, but with good communication skills, I can find support from people around me easily.” (Male, English translation)

“I am a shy person, so for me having a good relationship or friend at university will help me reduce the pressure in studying. Luckily, now I have some good classmates, so I do not feel bored when going to class.” (Female, English translation)

“I have a few close friends whom I can study with, which helps my learning ability gradually improve.” (Female, English translation)

In addition, all students shared the common opinion that the learning environment had a positive effect on their physical health thanks to its mental benefits.

“The current good learning environment helps me to have a refreshing spirit, no pressure when studying alone because I am surrounded by friends and teachers who are always ready to answer my questions. If no one supports and shares, I may feel tired and disoriented.” (Female, English translation)

4.3. The influence of learning environment on students’ learning outcomes

The students expressed that the setting by considering student learning styles contributed to their better learning outcomes.

“I think that the current learning environment helps me increase my learning ability. I have more motivation to study and would like to join in the studying activities in class.” (Male, English translation)

“Studying in this university, I become more active. Although I still face many difficulties in study, I have many good friends and even teachers who help me to improve our learning ability.” (Female, English translation)

5. CONCLUSION

The study aims to find out how the student's learning environment affects the student's learning process. The learning environment is not only the basics for learning, but the surrounding factors can affect student learning in many way. The learning environment can change academic performance, physical health and mental well-being. One practical implication is that any strategies to support a more holistic student learning experience through more effective use of learning environments should be developed at an institutional level.

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