MOROCCAN FACULTY STUDENTS PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS OFFICE HOURS

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Abstract

Office hours as a form of student-faculty interaction, especially at the university, have been the concern of a number of researchers in the teaching-learning process. Office hours have been considered in foreign universities among the priorities to achieve more efficacy in education, and thus those universities try to implement it in their teaching-learning process. However, less attention has been given to such forms of interaction in Moroccan universities in spite of being part of their curriculum. As such, the present study aims at investigating teachers and students' perspectives towards office hours in Moroccan universities. To achieve this purpose, taking the case of Moulay Ismail School of humanities, a quantitative research design was employed in the study. Through this design, quantitative data were enerated and analysed. Therefore, a sample of 183 (90 males and 93 females) university students completed the questionnaire. Findings have shown that students consider the implementation of office hours within their educational system to be part of the regularities, is an appealing step to the flourishing of the university's pedagogical methodology. But most importantly to engage students in the process of a developed interaction so as to better understand their class content as well as their professor's expectations and thus can have a big impact on their academic success.

Keywords: office hours, student-faculty interaction, Moulay Ismail University,

1. INTRODUCTION

Nobody can deny the importance of interaction in the educational process, and its success relies on how significant communication between faculty members and students is. In fact, office hours are a way through which faculty members build strong relationships with students, as they help them in strengthening their interactive communication. Educational institutions normally require an agreed-upon office hour's schedule number for teachers and students to meet and debate on issues that require more focus and mentoring to meet and answer their questions as well as to provide needed help (Dika, 2012). This obviously means that office hours help in drawing the curtain on the most prominent problems or obstacles students encounter in their studies, and thus address them early. Besides, thanks to office hours, teachers can clearly learn about students' interests, worries, and gain a clear-cut understanding of the course content.

Purpose of the study:

International universities across the world have reached a high standard of promoting a common ground for faculty-student interaction's effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to explore the conceptual perception of faculty-student interaction and to display the role of office hours as a speech event to ameliorate students' skills in performing good communicative competences in their classrooms.

Research questions

Research questions were grounded-base from previous readings and studies, which had a great impact on the development of these research questions. Some personal matters have also contributed to the emergence of these questions. The purpose was mainly to achieve an effective communication that would build a prominent faculty-student interaction. Therefore, this paper is motivate by two main research questions:

1) What are students' attitudes regarding office hours at the university?

2) What are students' perspectives towards a future-implementing of office hours in their universities

3) Research hypothesis:

The implementation of office hours would be highly encouraged by students

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Faculty-Student Interaction

Smith (1976), once claimed that the process of "involving students as partners in faculty initiated research projects, creates a ''university'' in epitome, "a company of masters and scholars". Accordingly, he rightly stressed the fact that faculty interaction essentially focuses on behavioral exchanges among three parties encompassing students, faculty and administrators. However, little is known about students-administrator contact unless a time of intense difficulty is concerned.

This topic of discussion brings simple research remarks, which suggest that there are four types of activities that regard faculty-student interaction. Gathering and evaluating information is considered the most significant and "time consuming" academic occupation in the sense that a university is more likely to be a research institution rather than a teaching one because the consumed time mainly revolves around reading scholarly materials, data analysis, organization of information as well as research conduction. Dissemination of information is another activity, which has known an increase in its use especially with the advent of technology. This means that the traditional exchange between instructors and students is no longer static but rather evolving in terms of supplemental devices. Moreover, faculty-student committee has been regarded as a plus, which has led to meaningful alterations. The reason behind this success is due to students' ability to voice their call concerning the university's matters. Finally, personal relationships consist of the last and fourth part. Here, "it is very

difficult if not impossible for faculty members to be totally objective where students are concerned". In other terms, students who are interested either in the faculty member tend to be more favored by many (Phillip C. Smith B.S., 1976, pp. 28–30).

2.2 Quality in Distance Education and Interaction

Undoubtedly, it takes an astute observation and deep understanding of communication's power. Today, the exponential augmentation of digital and online technologies has opened a new gate for academic institutions in the sense that more lights are she on student's perception of quality in distance education. In other terms, to experience another area of development, educational institutions seek for better results by implementing the application of technological devices within their syllabus. Generally speaking, it has been assessed that quality in a distance education was conceptualized in terms of both teaching and learning activities encompassing "course design, support services, and interaction as well as administrative practices that can encourage students to fulfill their educational goals" (Ortiz-Rodríguez, Telg, Irani, T Grady, & Rhoades, 2005).

More importantly Whitney et. al (2004, p. 95)argued that:

Quality interaction with faculty members has been shown to be a core element of student engagement, which is highly correlated with every desired outcome of higher education (Kuh et al.2010), as well as with students' confidence in their intellectual abilities (Cole 2007, 2008) and aspirations for further study (Hurtado et al. 2011). Office hours, by design, make space for such interaction.

One observation that is more simple-minded lies in instructor's impact over their students' use of office hours. The lack of the latter's utility weakens an efficient and healthy interaction. Accordingly, some investigations established few facts and reached conclusions over instructors' ability to influence students while attending their sessions; whereas other research confirmed the opposite (Griffin et al., 2014).

The following idea deals with instructors' supremacy over students' use of office hours, which is characterized by two major peculiarities. Bippus, Kearney and Brooks (2003) have pronounced the first one, as it, Jaasma, and Koper (1999) represent the relationship of teachers' impact along with their communal and corporal identities, which has a significant degree of satisfaction. Clearly, Kin and Sax (2009) believed that "students use on social identities align with those of the majority of professors at their institution are more likely to express satisfaction with their interaction with faculty". The second factor refers to professors' approachability to their students. In here, Wilson et al. (1974) and Jaasma and Koper (1999) have reported, "Some studies have linked out-of-class approachability with faculty in-class behaviors, especially their pedagogical practices, which instructors can control". As a result, the duration of time consumed is the core influential element of students' perception of teachers' approachability (cited in Griffin et al., 2014).

2.3 Office Hours in Higher Education

Several studies on faculty-students interaction sparked a debate over the past few years till now. Essentially, it is believed that universities would not have any significance without its members including administrative staffs, instructors and students. Following this premise, Dobrasky and Frymier (2004) claimed that "the most basic elements found within any educational settings are teachers and students" (cited in Yang Lai & Wan, 2011).

Seen from a scholarly perspective, Frymier and House (2000) defined the association between the teacher and students as an interpersonal relationship. Therefore, the two groups rely on each other in order to sustain their relationship. The latter was conceptualized beyond the basic understanding of people to be interpreted by Rowlins (2000) as "a mode of relationship"(cited in Yang Lai & Wan, 2011). As a result, it is noteworthy to claim that the teacher-student relationship is to go beyond the scope that, in the past, was exclusively restricted to professionalism.

Genuinely, Cox, E, McIntosh, L, Terenini, T, Reason, D and Lutovsky Quaye, R. major statement (2010) suggests that positive contact with faculty members is beneficial for university students in spite of the fact that less commonalities are shared especially outside the classroom. Supported by Smith's (1976) additional and personal claim, he stressed out students' learning by saying:

In spite of attempts made by interested faculty and students to broaden intellectual exchange on campus and due to structure learning in areas that might have additional learning impact, Bolton and Kammeyer point out that institutional attempts to structure student intellectual interactions seldom go beyond departmental clubs, teas with faculty members, and "awkward meetings in which faculty members are invited to dinner with students with the aim of stimulating some subsequent student discussion" (p.27)

For the previously mentioned reason, it is believed that academic purposes are not the only motives, which have been emphasized during campuses events. In other words, faculty and students are considered as social beings with multiple inspirations including personal hang-ups (Phillip C. Smith B.S., 1976).

Almost all private universities have followed a certain curriculum to promote and maintain their stance among others. Office hour's interactions are registered to be another type of spoken academic discourse established as "an out of class" duty. This speech event seems to be more beneficial for both parties, including students and teachers, because the face-to-face engagement has myriad of advantages, which reinforce the way Rawlins (2000) defined teacher-student relationship. In other words, the face-to-face method builds up a social and academic mutual ground for both parties. However, little is known about the academic prominence of office hours as well as its procedural accomplishment in the academic business among teacher and students (cited in Limberg, 2007).

When thinking about whether or not non-classroom interaction has an advantage, it is compulsory to take into consideration several measurements the topic itself evokes. Cox et al.

(2010) shed light on the fact that the American higher education has always believed that the educational merit of faculty-student connection outside the classroom walls is nearly the ancient and prevalent belief. In other words, the non-classroom setting is a well-grounded position to have an impact on the educational realm.

Additionally, Cox et. al (2010, p. 768) illustrated some of the concrete elements for students' educational development:

Positive student outcomes linked with faculty-student interaction include grade point average (Anaya and Cole 2001), persistence (Pascarella and Teranzini 1977), self-reports of learning (Lundburg and Schreiner 2004), plans for educate study (Hathaway et al. 2002), social integration/adjustment (Schwiter et al. 1999), and a variety of other educational leave valuable activities (Kuhand Hu 2001). For this reason, "studies of students' development of higher-order cognitive skills also suggest that the purpose and quality of the faculty-student interactions may be more important than their frequency", which later on have been concluded by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) in the sense that both of them highlighted the less significance of faculty-student frequency of interaction rather than its major core (as cited in Cox et al., 2010).

"Office hours are an institutionally required component of the academic life in higher education, yet as many instructors can attest, students seldom use them"(Griffin et al., 2014). The point of departure is the fact that all academic institutions are inclined to hold office hours' tendency to increase a healthy interaction between students and their instructors. The aforementioned statement is a positive development to the faculty student interaction, however, Fusani (1994), Nadler and Nadler (2000), Li and Pitts (2009) stated that several research on students' presence in office hours have been undermined in the sense that instructors face individualism of office hours, which highly confirms students' absence. Therefore, institutions as well as instructors must endeavor to offer better practices to boost students' utilization of office hours in order to build a common ground in which teachers students interaction would have productive results (as cited in Griffin et al., 2014).

Speaking of such a policy, office hours have become almost a necessity. According to Tinto (1983), Astin (1984) and Boyer (1987, 1990), this speech event "became a standard offering and undergraduate academic life in response to ongoing scholarly and political dialogue about what constitutes good practice in undergraduate education". Therefore, one has to highlight the magnitude and the value of faculty-students interaction. The reason behind this is featured in Chickering and Gamson's quote (1986), which states that " knowing a few faculty members will enhance students 'intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own value and future plans" (cited in Griffin et al., 2014).

3. METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter largely introduced literature about faculty-student interaction with the various platforms used for an effective communication. This chapter supplies a panorama of the methodology conducted in the study. To attain a more reasonable and complete descriptive

analysis of the study, two methods of data collection were employed. The first one is a questionnaire for students' responses, whereas the second is a semi-structured interview for teachers. The sections to be covered in the body of the methodology's chapter are the research design, population sampling, research instrument, data collection procedure and limitations.

3.1 Research Design

To achieve an in-depth comprehension of the topic, the convergent parallel design has been carried out by this study. The former is "a form of mixed methods design in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem'' (Creswell, 2014).

Having a corroborative purpose, the study aims to adopt a triangulation method by embracing the quantitative statistical outcomes along with the qualitative results that are performed independently, but gathered together and compared in the overall interpretation.

3.2 Population Sampling

Participants used in this research study were drawn from two primary groups of individuals. Driven by both objective and subjective insights, the study was carried on in order to uncover students' thoughts about their interaction with their professors. Consequently, a questionnaire was distributed to undergraduate students studying at Moulay Ismail University in the English department.[1] Along with the primary goal of the study, the choice of selecting the population was meant to obtain the view of students who are walking on a new path of education which, obviously, requires interaction with professors in and out-of-classroom. Specifically, out of 200 participants, who were intended, but randomly selected to make up the sample, only 183 respondents from the English department were able to participate. The research was determined to select only undergraduate students for some specific causes. Enrolling the university is, indeed, a new stepping-stone that requires lots of efforts from both students and teachers. Therefore, as students get in this arena, they become self-independent and maintenance as well as guidance from teachers are required and necessary. Furthermore, as the study was angled from a qualitative perspective, the study has tried to obtain information from another population using the interview. The recruitment procedure yielded 7 interested professors who agreed to willingly take part in the interviews in their second language to avoid any ambiguity in the interpretation process. Still, some difficulties have been encountered while connecting with professors due to their availability. Some of them were quite busy which made the researcher conduct the interview via email.

Concerning data gathering, the research opted for two different types. On the one hand, the primary data was drifted from the interview and questionnaire's answers given to the participants during the process of the survey. On the other hand, the secondary data was derived from the literature review that encompassed published documents and scholarly articles, which were of paramount pertinence to the whole study. This combination of the two types made the research more prosperous.

3.3 Results and Findings

Statistical reports are indeed very meticulous. Reading as well as interpreting them requires sufficient knowledge in terms of numeracy. Therefore, statistical literacy is almost a necessity for data presentation, especially when it comes to make the quantitative data valuable for the study. The previous section dealt with the research methodology encompassing the research design, population sampling, research instrument encompassing its reliability and the main reasons behind its selection, the description of the data collection procedure as well as the limitations and restrictions of the research.

The present section will shed light on the analysis as well as interpretation of the data that was gathered for the research. Accordingly, the goal sought in this part is, clearly, to introduce the data selected in an interpretive form in order to make sense of the information that were collected from different population. In the quantitative stage, the statistics provided by SPSS helped in converting the quantitative data into meaningful and readable information for a better representation. The qualitative approach takes a more exploratory perspective by examining the findings through coding and engendering themes that would allow the scope of the interpretation to be open. Typically, this section records the information obtained from the administered questionnaire in a software SPSS. The latter, statistically, analyzed the findings extracted from the questionnaire distributed to 183 participants at the faculty, and then computed the percentage of each item. The qualitative data is slightly different in terms of its content and data collection procedure. Analyzing qualitative data requires more endeavors, primarily because it is made up from observations, different perspectives and symbols. Therefore, attaining an absolute representation for such data is seemingly beyond the bounds of possibility.

Students' Perception on Office Hours

Table 1: Office hours' policy as a development of faculty-student interaction

	Strongly agree	Agree	disagree	Strongly disagree
First year	9.29%	16.39%	1.64%	0%
Second year	5.46%	10.93%	0%	0.55%
Third year	20.22%	25.68%	7.65%	2.19%
Total	87,97%		12,03%	

Table 1 shows whether university students are highly thinking of office hours in terms of building a healthy faculty-student interaction or not. 87.97% was the total range of students from the three levels who strongly agreed to and agreed to the fact that office hours' policy would make a great change in developing a promising communication between students and faculty members. Within the same respect, one of the respondents stated:'' office hours is one the best educational practices that can deepen communication and even friendship between students and teachers.'' Thus, this practice is considered to be vital in the faculty-student interaction as it helps faculty members identify students' most prominent problems and accordingly do what is necessary to assist students overcome those difficulties that hinder their studies. Nevertheless, most of students do not take advantage of office hours as one of

the interviewees clearly stated;'' yeah, I agree that office hours are of paramount importance to us as students, but most of us show reluctance to attend them.''. On the other hand, 12.03% refuted the statement; they agree or strongly disagree that office hours are not that important o them as students and thus obviously show reluctance to such practices. In this regard, an interviewee directly stated'' I cannot get along with my teachers. In fact, I really feel shy to look for my teachers just to ask questions'' This shows that many students have bad impression about the importance of office hours and this way they think that office hours have nothing to do with the advancement of their academic performance. Despite all those facts, the number of students who positively thought highly of office hours' policy was significant enough. This means those implementing office hours in the university's curriculum, for the sake of a better interaction, is almost a necessity that is required for both students and professors.

Table 2: The office hour's event should be implemented in public universities

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Fist year	7.10%	16 .94%	2.19%	1.09%
Second year	4.92%	9.29%	2.73%	0%
Third year	19.13%	28.42%	7.65%	0.55%
Total	68,86%		14,21%	

The above table indicated whether office hours should be implemented in public universities. Although this event is officially not part of the university's pedagogy, students seem to have an idea about its prominence in higher education. Accordingly, students, eagerly, answered with "strongly agree" and "agree" in all the levels 68.86%. Supportive claims to reinforce this argument basically revolved around the need for additional academic guidance and orientation, especially while conducting research studies among third grade students as one interviewee declared'' implementing office hours would be a great idea, of course. Office hours can really help in strengthening our academic performance.'' However, a great total number of students 14.21% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the core matter; they thought that office hours should not be implemented in universities. They believe that this practice is a waste of time and that it will help neither in developing their communication with their teachers nor in augmenting their academic performance. In this respect, one respondent stated'' office hours will not encourage us to interact with teachers because we tend to rely on ourselves more than teachers in the academic field do. 'This means that some students are still reluctant about attending office hours because they are not aware enough of the importance of this practice or may be because of other factors that need more investigation. Nevertheless, a great number of students are positive on implementing office hours as a way to foster and to strengthen communication with their teachers.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be concluded that most of Moroccan university students are positive towards the implementation of office hours. In fact, they reckon that office hours can make them understand their class content as well as their professors' expectations and thus a big

impact on their academic success would take place. However, some of them still have negative attitudes towards office hours because they see that they have no impact on their academic performance. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Moroccan universities should work, seriously, on the implementation of office hours, which not only would improve the interaction between faculty members and students, but also the atmosphere of universities would improve. Universities should adopt strategies to encourage faculty members to maintain regular office hours that can foster communication and therefore benefit students. Moreover, they have to prepare lectures for students that engender respect and appreciation instead of reluctance as it is necessary for students to recognize the great importance of such practices on their success.

Acknowledgment

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