

Enhancing Students' Class Participation in the Case of Second Year Tourism Management Students on 'Research Methods in Tourism'

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to enhance students' class participation in the case of second year tourism management students registered for 'research methods in tourism'. In order to accomplish research objectives, data were collected from the second year tourism management students. All second year tourism management students registered for the course research method in tourism were the participants of the study; the total numbers of the students are 65 but out of this 51 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed with descriptive research design. Self-administered questionnaire, 5 FGD having 12 members and observations for some sessions were used to collect the data. The reported instruments were prepared in English and they include both open ended and close ended type of questions; open ended questionnaires were prepared not to limit respondent's idea. Once the data collection stage was over, collected responses were organized in the form of tables by using percentage and Chi-square analysis. The result revealed that student's level of participation is highly affected by different factors such as in advance preparation, delivery of teaching material in advance, applying different active teaching methods by the instructor, availability of different rewarding means, mixing low achievers with medium and high achievers, language and student self-confidence. As a result, majority of the students (86.3%) have positive attitude on active participation since they believed that active participation will help them to share new ideas with their friends. Though some students are still inactive perhaps due to different psychological and personal factors that need further investigation; the actions implemented also bring some important changes that enhanced students' class participation.

Keywords: Tourism; Management; Questionnaire

Abbreviation: EPRDF: Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front; FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; FGD: Focus Group Discussion; HDP: Higher Diploma Program; MDGs: Millennium Development Goals; SWOT: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

Introduction

Background of the study

EPRDF launched a 20 years education sector indicative plan to implement the 1994 national education and training policy, improve educational quality, equity and relevance to achieve the MDGs' and objective of national development plan through supplying qualified work force with the necessary quantity and quality at all levels. Following this new development, Ethiopia board on ambitious expansion by increasing the national enrolment capacity from 90,000-150,000 and universities from 8-35 to ensure equity, access, accountability, relevance and responsiveness to the demands of the Ethiopian people [1].

Recently there have become changes in academia in the last previous years or so is the shift from lecture-based classes to courses that encourage a student-centered approach as per the direction from Ministry of Education. Action research can be used to understand practice; how to make practice better; realize how to accommodate outside change in one's practice and recognize how to change the outside to make practice better. It has been blamed that active student participation in higher educational institutions using classroom facilitates have limitation both in terms of acquirement of knowledge and development of problem solving skills regardless of there is very little empirical evidence to either confirm or deny this perspective. Recent literature on higher educational institution give considerable focus on the limitations of the lecture method of teaching and the need for more active student's participation in the classroom [2].

Suter [3] states the potential contributions of action research

by teachers and asserted that classroom teachers who conduct such research are reflective practitioners who can make exemplary contributions to instructional improvement. Action research described as being about the improvement of the understanding of practice and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.

Bruns [4] suggests that student participation in class should be grade; if left ungraded, part of the motivation that students need is lost and part of the record that the lecturer can use to facilitate individual student learning is not developed. Hammond [5] emphasizes that students' effective participation is a direct outcome of their individual preparation before the class. Teachers can an important role in encouraging participation whereas Frei [6] suggests that student participation is a function of the ability by the teacher to create a supportive environment for participation. The way of teachers' teaching approach matters more along students learning interest and teaching learning environment as well as administration.

Statement of the problem

These days, quality of education has become catching the due attention of Ethiopian government to take notice of different groups talking about the quality of education agenda than quantity from

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their standpoint to achieve their respective objectives and convincing government bodies on cross cutting matters. Quality education has become a major concern for all academics, governments and stakeholders due to pressures augment on quantity of skilled man power and quality of graduates' those which will have enormous impacts on the country socio-economic development.

Higher education institutions have a vivid mission, vision and objectives towards the attainment of the long run socio-economic development goals of the country in general and satisfying the specific societal capacity building needs in particular. This could be true if adequate input is available with core competencies incorporated in the curriculum and teaching learning process is student centered.

Carrying out action research on enhancing class participation is timely and essential to improve students' participation in classroom based teaching learning process. Among many alternatives to assure quality of education, enhancing students' class participation has become very decisive as direct personal observation, registrar and departmental documents of students show they have very low performance and interest for class participation.

Therefore, the researchers planned to identify the determinant factors that why students' class participation of Second year tourism management students registered for research methods in tourism is low and to make intervention based on the findings of the study.

Research questions

The main research questions to be attempted in this study are the following:

- Why students are not well participating in classroom based teaching learning process?
- What could be the possible approaches and solutions to enhance student class participation?

Objectives of the Study

General objective

The overall objective of the study is to enhance students' class participation in the case of second year tourism management students registered for 'research methods in tourism'.

Specific objectives

Specific objectives of the study are derived from the general objective of the study outlined as:

- To identify hindering factors for active participation in classroom based teaching learning process
- To explore possible recommendations and solutions classroom based teaching learning process
- To enhance students active participation in classroom based teaching learning process

Literature Review

The term "active learning" has been more understood intuitively than defined in commonly accepted terms. As a result, many educators say that all learning is active. Are not students actively involved while listening to lectures or presentations in the classroom? Research however, suggests that students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss or be engaged in solving problems [7].

Further, students must be engaged in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis and evaluation to be actively involved. Strategies promoting activities that involve students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing may be called active learning. The current literature on higher education places considerable emphasis on the limitations of the lecture methods of teaching and the need for more active students play too passive role in lectures. It is recommended that university teachers make greater use of instructional techniques that require active student participation like discussion, cooperative learning, debate, role playing, problem- based learning, and case studies [8].

Students who participate actively in the classroom will in fact learnt the subject matter more effectively than students taught in the traditional lecture mode and will show greater development in areas such as oral communication, critical thinking and problem solving. The new few empirical studies reported in the area, most were done in the laboratory rather than in actual classrooms, and of those done in the field, many were weak, in internal validity and or failed to include the types of instructional outcomes (for example, problem solving) believed to be most strongly influenced by active participation [9].

Freire in developing theories of education demonstrated how dialogue with others and reflection on our circumstances through "problem-posing" pedagogy brings about true education: people educating each other through their interactions in the world. Freire argued that the individual should form himself rather than be-formed and proposed that educational topics or opportunities to be taken from the daily experiences. This would imply two distinct steps: the first is to go to the place where the events take place o become familiar with the issues and second is to apply problem-posing thinking to the systematic learning process by emphasizing group interaction between the participants so that each person acquires consciousness of reality and truly expresses it leads students to construct knowledge with their own, building on what they already know [10] and individual's participation is central to the learning process and outcomes.

Hertenstein [11] states students can learn in two ways: through their own active participation and through the contributions of others and Christensen [12] further noted that such active learning enhances students' self-esteem-essential for effective learning-and gives them an opportunity to consolidate what they know by teaching others. Teaching for active participation and engagement, building on the knowledge base of students and assessing for interpretations and understandings is likely to result in collaborative and deep learning [10].

Hertenstein [11] argued that class participation enhances the learning environment as it can show that students are mastering skills appropriately, and their attitudes are changing therefore, these key learning outcomes can be measured. It also helps to highlight recurrent errors that reveal misunderstandings to be corrected. The teacher therefore has the role of assessing the patterns of class participation as these reveal areas of weakness and strength in the class.

Ellet [13] states if a student is shy and does not speak early in the semester, it becomes harder and harder as they put pressure on themselves to come up with great comments. The longer a student delays, the more likely it is that the student will end up not participating. The only way to become a good class participant is to participate. Christensen, [12] noted cultural, religious and language barriers are a key hindrance to student engagement in class; if a teacher is not sensitive to these barriers, student participation can be damaged beyond repair.

Ellet [13] notes that students try to reduce the risks in class participation by stock piling comments they expect to use in class. This 'canning of comments' however, means that if the class discussion does not proceed as they had expected, or if another student makes the comment before they do, they are lost. They will either give their comment at an inappropriate time or they may choose not to participate. Either way, they feel frustrated and may not prepare adequately for the next class. As soon as students perceive sense of unfairness, either in the calling patterns, the responses received or in the non-verbal communication of the teacher, they are likely to shut down and their participation becomes restrained. The discussion teacher therefore has a critical role to play, not just in delivering the appropriate content to students, but in thinking about the process of learning as well and creating an enabling environment to allow students to participate and learn.

Conceptual framework

Flow chart of conceptual framework is given in Figure 1.

Research Methodology

Research design

To meet the objective of the study, the researchers employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches that enable to obtain the required data along with cross-sectional descriptive design and focused on gathering qualitative data using questionnaires, focus group discussion and direct personal observation during class and secondary data from department and registrar documents. Description type of research used to describe phenomenon since the researchers had prior knowledge and exposure about problems and information needed to explain situations regarding low students class participation.

Sample size

According to Roscoe sample size larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research. Hence, researchers involved all second year tourism management students those registered for the course of research methods in tourism (65 students).

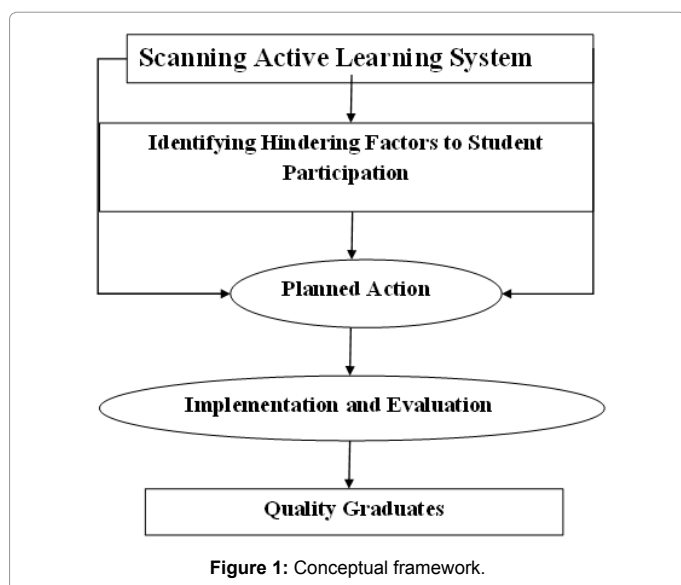


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

Subjects of the study

As mentioned in the target sample above, main subjects of the study were all second year tourism management students those registered for the course of research methods in tourism. Primary data included 5 groups with 12 members for focus group discussion and questionnaires, 2-3 class observation.

Secondary data existing data or information collects for a purpose other than that of the researcher. These were collected largely from documentation of the department and assistant registrar, supportive related literatures. As argued by Veal, secondary data used in this research that are predominantly qualitative were obtained from policies, strategic plans, reports, action plans, technical reports, statistical bulletins, information brochures, among others were accessed from relevant offices.

Data collection instruments

Predominantly qualitative data were collected from both secondary and primary sources using focus group discussion, questionnaires, direct observation and document tracing about students.

Focus group discussion: used to elicit personal data, the practices of students' class participation and discussion on all second year tourism management students those registered for the course of research methods in tourism with semi-structured questions and notes. It was helpful to explore other themes and nuances further enriching data of study held in classroom.

Direct observation: may use to study the participation levels of all second year tourism management students those registered for the course of research methods in tourism.

Document analysis: were used to explore information about all second year tourism management students those registered for the course of research methods in tourism from students' performance profiles, documents, especially content analysis predominantly from department of tourism management and assistant registrar.

Procedure of data collection

Prefeasibility study through intensive review of related literature was done to frame the scope of the study and established framework that followed with direct observation. Since primary data were the basis of this study, which is more of qualitative in nature, questionnaires and focus group discussion employed and conducted in class to elicit opinions and in between there was reiterative process of data gathering as it needed to do so (Appendix).

Data treatment

To understand the underlying state of affairs, the collated data were systematically verified, analyzed and interpreted using qualitative and to some extent simple descriptive statistics strategies. Qualitative data obtained from session observation notes and open ended questionnaires organized, reduced and analyzed into meaningful arrangements. Since data gathered, using primarily qualitative variables were subject to description and narrations of the phenomena. Thus, the major findings of the study presented in the forms of narration and phenomena description that focused on student class participation and percentage as well as tabulation for simple descriptive statistics. Quantitative data were carried out with the assistance of SPSS version 16 but qualitative data have been narrated the phenomenon of teaching learning process from active participation perspective based on the skills and knowledge of researchers.

Analysis and interpretation

This section presents the analysis and results of the research findings. The organization of raw data into systematically verified information employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were carried out with the assistance of SPSS version 16 but qualitative data have been narrated the phenomenon of teaching learning process from active participation perspective based on the skills and knowledge of researchers.

The descriptive statistics of sex

According to the above Table 1 82.4% of the respondents are male of which 38.1% always actively participate in the class discussion but the remaining 61.9% of male students do not participate always; 17.6% of the respondents are female of which only 11.1% are always active participants.

Student's attitude towards active participation

Majority of the respondents (86.3%) realize that active participation in a classroom helps them to share new ideas with their friends, 5.9% of respondents believe that they participate only to get mark and 3.9% of respondents also realize that participation in the classroom contribute nothing for their success rather it is wastage of time whereas the remaining 3.9% of respondents did say anything about active participation (Table 2).

The association between encouraging students and participation

As shown on the above Table 3, 34.2% (12.5 + 21.7) of the total participants did not get encouragement regularly from the instructor, while 83.3% of respondents who have get continuous encouragement from their instructor are regularly participate in a discussion. This indicates the instructor continuous encouragement will enable

Sex	Participation			
	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Total
Male	16 (38.1)	21 (50)	5 (11.9)	42 [82.4]
Female	1 (11.1)	7 (77.8)	1 (11.1)	9 [17.6]
Total	17 [33.3]	28 [54.9]	6 [11.8]	51 [100]

Note Figures in () indicates % within preparation.
Figures in [] indicates % out of total.

Table 1: Description of sex.

Description of students perception	Percentage
Time consuming	3.9
Sharing new idea	86.3
Obtaining mark	5.9
No idea	3.9
Total	100

Table 2: Student's attitude towards active participation.

Instructor encouragement	Participation			
	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Total
Always	10 (83.3)	2 (16.7)	0 (0)	12 [23.5]
Sometimes	2 (12.5)	10 (62.5)	4 (25)	16 [31.4]
Not at all	5 (21.7)	16 (69.6)	2 (8.7)	23 [45.1]
Total	17 [33.3]	28 [54.9]	6 [11.8]	51 [100]

Note Figures in () indicates % within preparation.
Figures in [] indicates % out of total.

Table 3: Association between the instructors encouragement with participation.

In advance preparation	Participation			
	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Total
Yes	8 (42.1%)	10 (52.6)	1 (5.3)	19 [37.3]
No	9 (28.1)	18 (56.2)	5 (15.6)	32 [62.7]
Total	17 [33.3]	28 [54.9]	6 [11.8]	51 [100]

Note Figures in () indicates % within preparation.
Figures in [] indicates % out of total.

Table 4: Association of In advance preparation for the lesson and participation.

In advance preparation	Participation			
	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Total
Lack of confidence	-	4	1	5 [45.5%]
Unable to understand the question	-	0	0	0 [0%]
Language difficulty	-	5	0	5 [45.5%]
Carelessness	-	1	1	1 [9%]
Total	-	10	1	11 [100%]

Note Figures in () indicates % within preparation.
Figures in [] indicates % out of total.

Table 5: Reason for not to participate.

students' to participate always in the class discussion. Frei [6] also suggests that student participation is a function of the ability by the teacher to create a supportive environment for participation

The chi-square test also shows the significance of the association between the instructor's encouragement and participation has positive relationship as p-value is very small when compared to the level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis of 'no association between the instructor encouragement and participation' is rejected.

Association of in advance preparation for the lesson and active participation

As depicted on the above Table 4, 37.3% of the total respondents prepare in advance before they come to class but only 42.1% of respondents who prepare in advance and actively participate in the class.

Majority of respondents (52.6 + 5.3), even if they prepare in advance on the lesson but they do not always actively participate in the class perhaps due to lack of confidence and language difficulty. This will be strengthened by Table 5 below, 45.5% of respondents who prepare in advance but not always actively participate in the class because of lack of confidence as well as language difficulty. Some researchers also support this like Christensen [12] argues language barriers are a key hindrance to student engagement in class participation and shyness to speak in public is also another hindrance to students not to participate. From the total respondents, 9% who prepare in advance but are not participate due to their carelessness.

As stated on the above Table 4, 62.7% of the total respondents who do not prepare in advance before they come to class but 28.1% of respondents always actively participate in the class may be because of they have confidence and good language communication skills.

The majority of respondents 71.8% = (56.2 + 15.6) of them do not prepare in advance for the class and they do not actively participate in the class.

The chi-square test shows that the p-value is much less than 0.05 in which the hypothesis of "no association between in advance preparation on the lesson and active participation in the class" is rejected. Hence, the result shows that advance preparation with confidence and language

skills have vital role to enhance student's participation.

Association between teaching methodology of the instructor and participation

As shown on the above Table 6, 47.1% of the respondents agree with the statement that the instructor is using student centered method of teaching but only 50% of the students always actively participate in the class whereas the remaining 50% of respondents participate some times.

52.9% of the respondents do not agree with the statement that the instructor apply student centered method of teaching. As a result, majority of respondents do not actively participate in the class since they believed that the instructor dominated and did not give them a chance to participate freely.

Therefore, it is possible to observe that there is association between the instructor method of teaching and participation. From the chi-Square test, the p-value is very small as compared to the level of significance which enables to reject the hypothesis of 'no association between the instructor method of teaching and participation'.

Time allocation by the instructor for discussion

As stated on the above Table 7, majority of respondents (56.9%) agreed that the instructor allocate sufficient time for discussion, 35.3% of respondents disagreed that the instructor did not allocate sufficient time for discussion whereas the remaining 7.8% of respondents did not decide about time allocation.

Rewards given by the instructor for active participants

As shown clearly on the above Table 8, students were asked whether the instructor reward active participants or not. The students' response shows that majority of respondents (67.7%), there is no any reward means to encourage active participants but the remaining 33.3% agreed there is reward mechanism to encourage active participants in the forms of bonus marks, participation mark and appreciation for participants.

Mode of delivery	Participation			
	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Total
Two way communication	12 (50)	12 (50)	0 (0)	24 [47.1]
One way communication	5 (18.5)	16 (59.3)	6 (22.2)	27 [52.9]
	17 [33.3]	28 [54.9]	6 [11.8]	51 [100]

Note Figures in () indicates % within preparation.
 Figures in [] indicates % out of total.

Table 6: Association between the instructor teaching methodologies with participation.

Students opinion on time allocation of the instructor	Percentage
Agree	56.9
Neutral	7.8
Disagree	35.3
Total	100

Table 7: Students' opinion on the instructors' time allocation for discussion.

Students opinion on the reward means of the instructor	Percentage
Yes	33.3
No	67.7
Total	100

Table 8: Student's opinion on the instructor rewarding means.

Some scholars like Bruns [4] suggests that student participation in class should be rewarded.

Suggestions, observation and focus group discussions

As per the students suggestions individually and in focus group discussions as well as some session observations by the researchers, the following measures should be taken:

- It is better if the instructor give them the teaching materials in advance with discussion questions that enable them to prepare in advance and actively participate in the class;
- The instructor shall convey the message in more simple and understandable language with brainstorming questions;
- The instructor shall motivate students to participate through incentives as a form of reward like mark, applaud, prizes, etc.,
- Allocate sufficient time and give the students a chance to discuss on issues by their own language because some students do not participate because of the language difficulty;
- The instructor should improve on student centered teaching learning process using different active teaching methods like cross over group, jigsaw, micro teaching, hot seating, group discussion, presentation, pyramid, gold fish, debate, role play, gap lecture, etc.,
- Instructor shall rearrange student class arrangement like mixing low achiever with high achievers and so on;
- Make the discussion questions more attractive and associate with real life situations;
- Giving a clue about the next session.

Advantages of class participation

Some students, instructors and ministry of education believe that student centered method of teaching will contribute about quality education as student class participation helps them to share new ideas with their friends, develop self-confidence, improve language and so forth.

Disadvantage of class participation

Some students also believe that class participation has its own disadvantages such as consuming time, misleading and confusing ideas may be raised unless the instructor give concluding remark, uninterested students may be forced to join the system and so on.

Proposed action

Based on the analysis results, the following planned measures should be taken:

- ✓ Giving teaching materials in advance for preparation with discussion questions;
- ✓ Giving the students a chance to discuss by using their own language and make clarification with Amharic language accordingly;
- ✓ Supporting them to build their self-confidence by encouraging with rewards to speak freely;
- ✓ Applying different active learning methods (student centered method of teaching) by rearrange group members in different achievers;
- ✓ Informing in advance about the forthcoming sessions to prepare in advance and actively participate in the class.

Implementation

As recommended and planned by the researchers, the instructor has taken the following actions to enhance student class participation:

- Gave students the teaching materials in advance with discussion questions to enable them well prepare about the day's lesson to actively participate in the class;
- Allowed the students to express their understanding using Amharic language to clarify ideas accordingly;
- Supported them to build their self-confidence by encouraging with rewards to speak freely and allotted sufficient time;
- Applied different active learning methods (student centered method of teaching) by rearrange group members in different achievers;
- Informed in advance about the forthcoming sessions to prepare in advance and actively participate in the class.

Evaluation

After implementing the proposed actions recommended by the researchers, the research team members found the implemented strategies bring some important changes such as enhanced students participation, applied various active learning methods by the instructor, students came with well preparation in advance, high participation of students using Amharic language, improved student self-confidence after mixing low achievers with medium and high achievers.

Despite that some students are still passive perhaps due to different psychological and personal factors that need further investigation; the actions implemented bring some important changes that enhanced students' class participation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Student's level of participation is highly affected by different factors such as in advance preparation, delivery of teaching material in advance, applying different active teaching methods by the instructor, availability of different rewarding means, mixing low achievers with medium and high achievers, language and student self-confidence.

As a result, majority of the students (86.3%) have positive attitude on active participation since they believed that active participation will help them to share new ideas with their friends. Though some students are still inactive perhaps due to different psychological and personal factors that need further investigation; the actions implemented also bring some important changes that enhanced students' class participation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings drawn by the researchers, the following suggestions are forwarded for further improvements to enhance students' active participation as:

- ✓ The university shall trace out the psychological and personal factors that influence student active participation;
- ✓ Class arrangement and size shall be considered to implement student centered learning system intensively;

Language barriers and self-confidence shall be investigated to enhance student participation.

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