

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES: A STUDY IN A SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Education is a process by which man transmits his experiences, new findings, and values accumulated over the years, in his struggle for survival and development through generations. Higher education is one of the centers of excellence for producing human resources necessary for socio – economic development of a country. Students of higher education institutions face a myriad of pressure and challenges in the academic environment as they seek to optimize performance. Measuring of academic performance of students is challenging since student performance is product of socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors. Within the past decade, government of Sri Lanka has been struggling to establish a quality education system within the universities with prime objective of maximizing quality and relevance for job market by delivering high quality education that produces well-educated, skilled, mannered students according to needs and requirements of the dynamically growing market. There are two groups of students as generally perceived i.e. those who improve and those who don't improve.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the commonly used indicator of academic performance (Hasley, 1995; Connelly et al., 1998). Majority of universities in Sri Lanka has set a minimum CGPA that should be maintained by students in order to continue an undergraduate degree programme in faculties of humanities and social sciences. At the University of Ruhuna, the minimum cumulative CGPA requirement for undergraduate students is 2.0. To create a separation between high academic performers and low academic performers, we use the cut off points for offering first class, second class upper division (3.0 or more) and second class lower division or less (less than 3.0). This separation is more reliable according to literature (Richins, 1994; Pinto et al., 2000). The keen observation within the last decades resulted that the academic performance was gradually decaying and this situation is contradictory

to the objective of government higher education policy. Therefore, this study is trying to explore the significant factors that determine the academic performance.

This study attempts to find out factors, which are responsible for student's inelastic behavior towards study along with identifying those factors, which help a student to make progress in his studies. This study focuses on investigating the factors affecting performance of fourth year university students. The output of the study is expected to serve as an input for education policy of the country in general, and improvements of education in the university in particular and contribute to the research in education.

Primary data was collected through a well-defined questionnaire from sample of 128 faculty students. The collected data on variables, through an appropriate literature survey, analyzed by using statistical techniques such as Chi – Squared test and multiple logistic regression.

The results of the study shows that the most important factors affecting students' performance are gathering of extra knowledge, well pre-preparation for examinations, higher English knowledge, extra curricular activities and self – esteem. Gender, number of attempts for A/Level and its Z –score and parents' education are not significant factors.