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STUDENT'S ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING: STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS ASSIGNMENT WRITING

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Abstract

Education essentially needs to provide opportunities to acquire the knowledge skills that students will need to survive in a competitive world and be competent in changing demands. Therefore the educational system should be well shaped and effective in its approach. There is an increasing need for paradigm shift from “teacher centric” to “Student centric” or “Active learners”, where the Teacher is no more a “disseminator” but “facilitator”. There have been several methodologies of teaching learning like Experiential Learning, group discussion, group learning, use of ICT, problem solving, etc. Each method of learning has its own level of effectiveness and limitations. This paper looks only at Academic Assignment Writing (AAW) as a learning methodology.



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Introduction:

It is an important academic need , to revise the teaching methodologies adopted by the teachers in higher education institutions, to make classrooms more educative and ensure effective learning. The transformation of classroom experiences requires a fundamental shift in how an individual instructor approaches teaching and learning, moving from an information-transfer, teacher-cantered model to one that is concept-focused, learner – centered and collaborative. Therefore, It essential to understand that the emphasis is shifting from conventional teaching to integrate teaching (Smith,2005) Accordingly, Teaching comprises of principles and methods used by the teacher to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on the subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. Teaching approaches can be classified into teacher-centered and student-centered approach to learning. Whichever approach the teacher or the educational institute follows, the end goal is to achieve a better Student Performance Rating. (Shweta D, 2018)

Fortunately, this century has ensured multiple sources of information and knowledge thereby witnessing a paradigm shift from teaching centric to learner centric. Accordingly, the role of a teacher should not merely involve a simple transfer of knowledge to students. What is required is a transformation of teaching methodologies which will facilitate and influence the

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process of active learning. The Core focus is critical thinking, problem solving, team work, encouraging students to be lifelong learners and preparing them for the global market. It simply means integrating academic knowledge and practical knowledge. (Huber and Hutchings, 2004). Thus, The alternative methods based on lectures, seminars and assignments seems to be beneficial to student community (Chandra Ram, 2016)

What is Academic Writing? Academic Assignment Writing is a discourse where students follow specific guidelines to complete a topic in a clearly defined language that help the students know their statement of purpose of their assignment and outcomes. Structuring, developing paragraphs feature and arguments with evidences in a formal language are some of the characteristics of assignment writing. In this method, the teacher is no more a disseminator but a facilitator. The approach is student centric, where class rooms are place of active learning and knowledge creation.

According to Chandra Ram (2016) usually, many students do not write assignment responses on their own, instead try to copy from web or fellow colleagues. Thus, students are more interested in the product than the process. Therefore, it is challenging to make students understand that the assignment writing as such could be self learning mode that would also develop skills. If well planned, executed and timely interventions by the teachers would serve the purpose.

Objectives:

The main focus is to review assignment writing as an mode of active learning and participation of the students. Therefore, the objectives are :

- To assess the students motivation level, class participation level, level of competencies and effectiveness of the methodologies.
- Asses the skills learnt through these methodologies.

Data source and methodology

The following study is empirical, purely based on primary survey. 76 students of First and Second year were offered Geography at the BA Level of Parvatibai Chowgule College, Margao- Goa were chosen as samples.

An Assignment topic was given as assignment topic with necessary guidelines. The guidelines included date of submission, format of assignment, typesetting, and referencing style. A month was given for submission after the date of announcement of the assignment

topic. The assignment was to be worked in a group of 4-5 students who were independently off the college hours.

After the submission, this questionnaire was administered to the students to gauge their perceptions. The number of questions were 9 in number which had sub-questions related to announcements of the assignment, the assignment format, assignment structure, support and assignment group work and learning experience. This was purely on likert scale 1- 5 (indicating 1- strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree). This was then computed and analysed and represented in the form of mean score and percentage.

Methodology and Format of assignment in Chowgule College

The timeline for assignment writing is as follows:

Timeline	Tasks
Week 1	Introductory lecture (topic and groups are distributed, guidelines and expectations are also provided) and Collection of resources in group
Week 2	Discussion and writing of assignment (rough draft)
Week 3	Teachers assistance to finalize
Week 4	Certification from the Writing Centre and submission

Structure of the assignment writing

- a) Abstract
- b) Introduction
 - Objectives
 - Review of literature methodologies
- c) Discussion
 - Main Idea
 - Sub- Idea
- d) Conclusion
 - Remarks
- e) Bibliography

The teacher plays a very important role in academic assignment writing, from the start till the end. The teacher meets the students in groups, only helps in giving directions, and monitors the student’s progress. Finally, the only when the teacher is confident enough that the students have worked through the assignment permits the submission of the assignment.

Discussion

According to the study conducted to assess the level of effectiveness of Academic assignment writing, following were the results noted. In the process of conducting the survey, the

selected students were requested to use a particular method or procedure to complete the assignment. Through these procedures, the students were exposed/taught various computer skills and other skills of assignment writing skills such as avoiding plagiarism, etc. Among the acquired skills listed in the table 1, the mean scores of all the skills showed above 3. The highest mean score was for the computer skills acquired by the students. Most of the students learnt various computer skills such as assignment structuring, text formatting, referencing, etc. Apart from computer skills, the skills of information collection were also learnt, as depicted in the mean score. The students preferred to request their teachers/peer tutors for assistance compared visiting the writing centre. Most of the students showed positive feedback to group work learning.

Majority of the students agree that the assignment was given well in advance and the teacher clearly defined the expectations. The AAW demands certain standards and therefore the students needed to work collaboratively and therefore it was challenging to slice time out of their academic schedule and work on the assignment. The responses for the time was low (mean 1.23)

Table No 1 :Academic Assignment Writing : Responses of the Students

	Student's count & responses					Mean Score
1. The assignment topic was given well in advance.	-	-	-	-	35	100 %
2. Proper explanation of the assignment	-	-	-	3	32	-----
Skills : Ratings scores	1	2	3	4	5	Mean Score
3. While doing this assignment, I learnt these skills:						
a. Skill of collection of information	2.85	0	60	22.85	14.28	3.45
b. Assignment Writing/ Structure	6.25	0	40.62	43.75	9.37	3.5
c. Computer Skills (text formatting, inserting table, heading, subtitling, etc.)	0	11.42	11.42	57.14	20	3.85
d. Bibliography/ Referencing	0	14.28	40	28.57	17.14	3.48
e. Avoiding plagiarism (copy and paste)	6.06	27.27	36.36	9.09	21.21	3.12
4. For assignment, I used the following support/ assistance						
a) Teacher/ Peer Tutor	21.87	28.12	18.75	15.62	15.62	2.75
b) Writing Centre	80	6.66	6.66	3.33	3.33	1.43
c) Library	53.33	10	6.66	13.33	16.66	2.3
d) Computer Lab	48.38	9.67	12.90	16.12	12.90	2.35
5. Group work:						
a. I understand that learning in group is a good idea	12.5	0	40.62	25	21.87	3.43
b. There was proper co-operation/team	10	16.66	36.66	20	16.66	3.16

work in our group						
c. There was sufficient intervention by peer tutor/ teacher	3.44	6.89	55.17	24.13	10.34	3.31
d. The group had sufficient time to complete the assignment.	83.87	16.12	0	0	0	1.23
6. Learning Experience						
a. This experience of academic assignment writing has enabled us to become self learners	5.71	17.14	28.57	37.14	11.42	3.31
b. It has given me confidence of understanding	2.85	11.42	28.57	40	17.14	3.57
7. Doing assignment was enriching learning experience	0	8.57	91.42	0	0	2.91
8. Overall, my experience of using academic writing skills learning to write an assignment would be rated	0	0	70.58	17.64	11.76	3.41
9. Comparing previous assignment, I think the quality of assignment would be positively scaled to:	15.38	11.53	23.07	38.46	11.53	3.19

A total of three methods were used for comparison. These included chalk method, Information-Communication Technology and the Assignment writing method. According to the results of the survey, 67% of students felt that assignment writing was more effective than other methods listed above. On a likert scale, from 0 – 5, assignment writing achieved a score of 3.60, which is higher than the other methods.(Table 2) This is because, the chalk method and the ICT (Information-Communication Technology) method are more passive in nature compared to the assignment writing method.

Table No 2 : Scale of Effectiveness-Teaching Methodologies

Sr.No	Method	Scale of effectiveness (%)	Mean Score (0-5)
1	Chalk Method	40	2.76
2	ICT	58	3.00
3	AAW	67	3.60

Table 3 : Motivation and Class Participation (in Percentage)

Sr.No	Method	Motivation Level	Class Participation
1	Chalk Method	40	50
2	ICT	58	60
3	AAW	67	65

Traditional method of chalk method had low scores , while the use of ICT had above average score , both , motivation level and class participation. Students response to Academic Assignment Writing has been substantially higher than the other two method (table 3).

Skills Acquired

Academic Assignment Writing taught the students skills such as computer skills, language and grammar, team work, mutual understanding, understanding viewpoint in different perspectives, etc.

Student's Perception

Academic Assignment writing demands a particular set of skills in order to complete the research. Therefore students felt that these demands were taxing and had extensive research to put forth their arguments. Thus, Assignment writing indicated active and passive participants in terms of teamwork.

Conclusion

There is a need for in change in teaching methodology. Adoption of other learning-teaching methodologies proves to be more effective than conventional teaching techniques. Academic assignment writing(AAW) is an important part of any education system in order to ensure quality and is proved to be a more efficient and effective methodology. Writing skill is the basic necessity to progress in any academic/non-academic career. Academic assignment writing not only helps in shaping the student's writing skills but in bargain it teaches the students various other skills at a professional level.

The present study summarizes that, it is important academic need, to relook into the teaching methodologies adopted by the teachers in higher education institutions, to make classrooms more educative and ensure effective learning. The transformation of undergraduate classroom experiences requires a fundamental shift in how instructors approach teaching and learning, moving from an information-transfer, teacher-centered model to one that is concept-focused, learner - centered, and collaborative

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