



Class-time utilization in business schools in Tunisia



Omar Ben-Ayed^{a,*}, Hedia Lahmar^b, Raoudha Kammoun^b

^a College of Business and Economics, Qatar University, PO Box 2713, Doha, Qatar

^b College of Economics and Management (FSEGS), University of Sfax, BP 1088, Sfax 3018, Tunisia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 August 2015

Received in revised form 7 December 2015

Accepted 15 January 2016

Keywords:

Educational/learning time
Time utilization
Classroom
Business schools
Developing countries
Tunisia

ABSTRACT

Tunisian Universities, like many other universities in the developing countries, do not adopt any textbooks and rather rely on classrooms as the main learning resource for the students. This study is concerned with observing what is going on inside the classrooms of five business schools. The collected data, relating to 75 randomly selected classes, show that the instructors are utilizing on average less than 55% of the time of the lecture for teaching purposes. From their side, the students recorded an attendance rate lower than 34%. The rate drops to 20% when excluding the students engaged in extraneous activities. These incredible figures raise serious questions about the academic learning of the students.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Economists have always highlighted the vital role of education in boosting economic growth and development. According to the [World Bank \(2000\)](#), education can be considered, thanks to its crucial impact, the most important investment when it comes to human resources. [Peck and McGuiness \(2003\)](#) assert that education and knowledge have been the foremost incentive and foundation for successful economic development in most developed countries. [Akkari \(2004\)](#) endorses that investment in knowledge is a critical factor in economic expansion as education is a primary component in any development strategy. [Abdessalem \(2011\)](#) states that the role of education does not simply consist in providing skills for economic growth but also in offering a powerful tool for social development as it can help bridge social gaps and ameliorate health and living standards. [McGrath \(2013\)](#) affirms a humanistic and holistic vision of education as essential to personal and socioeconomic development. [Sayed and Ahmed \(2015\)](#) establish that all the reports and public discussions agree that education should be core to any future development framework and that education quality is central to education change and transformation.

Higher education institutions particularly play the major role of acquiring and transmitting knowledge. In such countries as the United States and Germany the university and the industry work together to achieve sustainable development through the transfer of technology and the promotion of talents and ideas ([German Center for Research and Innovation, 2012](#)). [Zhou and Vaccaro \(2010\)](#) point out that successful economic development relies heavily on a vibrant and progressive system of higher education. Higher education is indispensable for development; it is the foundation upholding much of the economic and social well-being, and it is a vital tool for enhancing economic productivity and ensuring social cohesion ([World Bank, 2000](#)). Statistical evidence from many developed countries confirms that education in general and higher education in particular contribute to the corroboration and sustainability of development ([Issa and Siddiek, 2012](#)). Higher education and scholarly research play a leading role in enhancing comprehensive development and rapid growth that are necessary for all nations dealing with the effect of globalization ([Benavot and Gad, 2004](#)). Higher education may be considered an empowerment tool when it comes to participation in the global economy, promoting innovation, bolstering social mobility, and creating democratic and innovative leadership and citizenry ([World Bank, 2011](#)).

Tunisia, a North African country with a population of eleven million people ([Countries of the World, 2015](#)), is probably one of the few developing countries that grasped the lesson about the importance of education. Indeed, it has given top priority to education since its independence from France in 1956. It has been

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +974 33389635.

E-mail addresses: omar.benayed@qu.edu.qa (O. Ben-Ayed), hedia.lahmar@fsegs.rnu.tn (H. Lahmar), raoudha.kammoun@fsegs.rnu.tn (R. Kammoun).

spending around 20% of its state budget and 7% of its gross domestic product in education (OIT, 2013; MHESR, 2013). All levels of education (including higher education) are free and guaranteed for all students. School enrollment rate for children aged between 6 and 16 years has reached 93.4% in 2012 (OIT, 2013). Tunisia was considered at some point in time one of the success stories as its education performance index (combining net enrollment rate, gender equity and school completion rate) ranked 20 places above its income ranking (Akkari, 2004). Quality has been a major concern in the Tunisian educational system; in order to qualify for University, students are required to spend at least thirteen years in elementary, middle and secondary schools (which represents at least one year more than most countries in the world), in addition to passing a national exam, called baccalaureate, where the pass rate rarely exceeds 60% (OIT, 2013).

The Tunisian educational system heavily depends on the French scheme. The Arabization effort incorporated in the 1970s has decreased the use of the French language in the elementary and middle levels (the first nine grades) but not in the secondary and higher education levels. The language was not a constraint for the Ministry of Education in producing a full range of textbooks covering all course subjects for pre-university students. However, it was impossible for the Ministry of Higher Education to do the same considering the large number of the courses, their varieties and the rapid change of their contents from year to year (especially in such fields as computer science, engineering and business). University students in Tunisia have to rely on handouts and class-notes rather than on textbooks; and instructors have to prepare from scratch their course materials (texts, slides, homework, exams ...). In such a system, where the listening during the lectures overweighs the reading at home, the learning gained by the students highly depends on the effectiveness of both the teacher and the students in utilizing the time of the lecture.

Like almost every other country in the region, most universities and higher education institutions in Tunisia are state institutions, funded and financed quasi totally by the government (Kazem, 1992). In trying to maximize the learning of the students, the Ministry of Higher Education allocated a large number of classroom hours for most of the programs offered by the Tunisian Universities. For example, the students majoring in the business administration field are typically required to attend more than 30 classroom hours per week. This study aims at investigating the extent to which the classrooms are playing their assumed role in the discipline of business administration, which represents one of the most important disciplines counting for about 15% of the total number of students (MHESR, 2013, 2014).

The paper is organized in five sections. The next section provides a review of the related literature. The third section, which describes the methodology, shows how we used a direct observation approach to provide a snapshot of the proceedings of the classes in five business schools and record what is going on inside their closed classrooms. The results are presented and discussed in the fourth section. The last section concludes the paper with some recommendations for further research.

2. Related literature

There is abundant literature on time utilization analysis. Much of it is related to health care applications. Ben-Ayed and Al-Abbasi (2002) studied the time utilization of outpatient department in a Saudi public hospital. Westbrook et al. (2011) investigated the time that nurses spend with patients, in individual tasks and with other health care providers. Webster et al. (2011) estimated the time needed by the nursing staff to manage the unoccupied beds in a hospital. Talati et al. (2015) analyzed the time utilization and

cancellations of scheduled cases in the operation theater complex of a tertiary care teaching institute.

Some other works are concerned with social and work perspectives. Peters and Haldeman (1987) studied the time spent by school-age children for household work in single-parent, two-parent-one-earner and two-parent-two-earner families. Tschan et al. (2004) investigated the time spent by professionals in private social interactions at work versus the time they spend in their task-related interactions.

The analysis of time utilization in education has been the subject of a number of researches. Sanford and Evertson (1983) observed how class time is used in junior high classes and studied the relationship between class-time use and student achievement, behavior and attitude. Hollowood et al. (1995) looked into the use of time in an inclusive school serving students with mild to profound disabilities. Nonis et al. (2006) explored what business and marketing students are doing with their time; their examination was not limited to study and work but also included other activities such as entertainment. Horng et al. (2009) highlighted the relationship between the time principals spend on different types of activities and school outcomes. Vannest and Hagan-Burke (2010) studied how special education teachers distribute their time across such activities as academic instruction, non-academic instruction, assessment and support. Cook et al. (2015) observed five teachers in grades 3 to 6 in the pilot year of the Indiana Science Initiative program intended to reform science education.

The examination of the relationship between time and student outcomes became a subject of interest by several studies as time is the scarce resource in schools, and the organization of time may well be the most important variable in academic achievement (Aronson et al., 1998). Time in education can be called *educational time* or *teaching time*; the two terms are synonyms. Many researchers found that there is a strong relationship between the time spent in education and the student learning (Borg, 1980; Cotton, 1989; Karweit, 1985; Fisher et al., 1981). Time is by far one of the most prominent requisites for achievement, and its correlation with learning has been consistently proven in educational research (Gettinger, 1995).

Educational time often refers to allocated time, engaged time or academic learning time (Brown and Saks, 1986; Borg, 1980; Cotton, 1989; Fisher et al., 1981; Fredrick and Walberg, 1980). As per Cotton (1989), *allocated time* is the amount of time assigned for an activity or event; more specifically it refers to: (i) school time (the amount of time spent in school), (ii) classroom time (the amount of time spent in classrooms not counting lunch, recess, time spent changing classes, etc.), or (iii) instructional time (the classroom time used in teaching students a specific type of knowledge, concepts, and skills related to school subjects, excluding routine procedural measures, transitions, and discipline). *Engaged time* is the total amount of time actually spent in learning activities (Fisher et al., 1981). Carroll (1963) found that engaged time is an important component of the time-learning relationship. It has more effect on learning than does allocated time because it addresses the importance of student-teacher and student-curriculum interaction, which are both important factors in improving learning (Karweit and Salvin, 1981). *Academic learning time* is the amount of time students spend on actual tasks involving novice data, i.e. the period during which a targeted concept correlates with a student's motivation to learn and results in actual learning (Aronson et al., 1998). To improve the learning for students some studies look into extending the allocated time, while others focus on engaged time or academic learning time (Aronson et al., 1998). Several researchers including Marvin and Stuck (1982); Noonan (2007) have determined that: (i) There is a small positive relationship between the amount of allocated time

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841241>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841241>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)