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Subject : 21751 Management Research

Methods

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“Students’ attitudes towards exams at Postgraduate Level”

Abstract

Introduction

At the beginning of the semester, the teacher asked the class why we chose to take this subject, Management Research Methods. In her leading question, she asked if we chose this subject for without having exam. Similar question was made by my other teacher from other subject as well. This makes me inspired to be interested in doing survey on exam. On the same day, when the teacher asked us to think about choosing a topic for our survey in our group, I initiated this topic to our group that agreed to choose it. Therefore, this topic, “Students’ attitudes towards exams at Postgraduate level” became our survey’s topic.

Aim and Expectations

Bennett (1991) defines research as “a systematic, careful inquiry or examination to discover new information or relationships and to expand or verify existing knowledge for some specified purpose”. According to Bennett, research is carried out to inquire about discovery of new knowledge or expending existing knowledge with a specific purpose. Our aim is to explore how Postgraduate students perceive about doing exams.

At Postgraduate level of study, there are various assessment methods and most subjects have combination of different assessment approaches such as assignments (individually or in groups) and presentations. Exams are, however, not compulsory in every subjects at the Postgraduate level. Depending on subject nature and subject area, exams are unnecessary for some subjects.

There is an interesting phenomenon that most students prefer to choose subjects which have no exams. Teachers are also aware of the fact that students have no preference to having exams. It clearly shows that in first classes of the subjects that have no exams, the teachers usually ask the same question if the students take these subjects for not having exams.

Moreover, by choosing subjects based on without having exams is not only a controversial debate, but it also has impact on students’ learning styles and strategies. In addition, it can be a negative effect on students’ future career development. Whilst students choose the subjects based on without having exams, it sometimes is irrelevant to their interests, and it can also create negative attitudes towards their learning. This is one reason to carry out the survey.

According to our background knowledge and own experiences, our peer students prefer to assignments than exams. There are some reasons why students prefer to do assignments. Doing assignments is less stressed due to the fact that it needs not require memorizing the content of textbook and finishing at limited time. Trying to arrive to exam hall is also a stressful matter. Exams are more stressful for having limited time, demanding more preparation, including memorizing for closed book exams.

**Introduction to Survey**

Having reasons above, we have a passion to carry out a survey on students’ attitude towards exams. The survey is mainly based on questionnaire which has some questions related to find out how students have attitudes towards exams. The questionnaire is based on multiple choices, and easy to understand. They are also easy to choose. There is one open-ended question to find out how they perceive on exams. Furthermore, there are two different types of students: international and local students. There can be some different situations between international and local students. For international students, they live in a different environment from their homeland. It can be more stressful for them in studying than local students that live in a more relaxed environment. Based on this issue, the questionnaire has a question for asking whether they are international or local student.

**Aims and Expectation**

Aim of survey

Our survey aims to explore postgraduate students’ attitudes towards exams at the Postgraduate level. Their point of views towards exams can be different based on social status and background. The type of exams also has impact on their attitudes towards exams. According to our experience, many students usually complain about having exams, and they prefer to have at least open book exams. No matter whatever outcome of survey is, favouring positive attitude towards exams or negative attitude towards exams, it is worth doing this survey to explore extent of students’ preference to exams. The survey can be useful at least to discover how students perceive on exams.

exams are in favour or not so as to help students studying at Postgraduate level.

Expectation of Survey

Before doing survey, there are some expectations for the survey. These expectations are based on the aim of the survey and our background knowledge and experience. Whilst we are studying at Postgraduate level, we discover ourselves that most of us have negative attitudes towards exams. It can be based on some reasons and assumption like the fact that exams are stressful. Moreover, exams require more preparation than other assessments such as assignments and presentations. Definitely, it requires memorization which most people have less interest. According to my own experience at UTS, there are some teachers who told us that they could not demand for not doing exams. Some teachers admit that exams are only for memory testing, not assessing students’ ability of practical knowledge that is necessary at Postgraduate level.

Therefore, we expect that most of Postgraduate students have less favoured attitude towards exams, especially older working students who study part time as they work full time and have less time of preparation for exams.

Bennett (1991) suggests that research is an essential management tool.

Methodology

Our survey is questionnaire-based survey which is the most common approach in management research (Veal and Ticehurst 2000).

Sample selection

Whilst our topic is in relevance of students at Postgraduate level, our target group is Postgraduate students at the University of Technology Sydney. Sampling of our survey is 40 Postgraduate students that are our classmates. In this semester, all of my classes are evening sections in which majority is local full time working students. Most of them are part time students. It is one of the reasons to expect that full time working people find the exams harder as they hardly find time for preparation.

Questionnaire development

According to Veal and Ticehurst (2000), open-ended question is a line or space left for the respondent to write their own answer without providing any prior list of answers in a self-completed questionnaire.

The week after the first class of this subject, we met up for group meeting and we started to prepare survey proposal and did final decisions for questionnaires. Being the first time of doing survey, there were some mistakes which were judged by our classmates and corrected by the teacher. Finally, we could be able to start our survey which was carried out in our classes to make sure to have our targeted sampling of Postgraduate students.

The questionnaire has ten questions including one open-ended question which is aimed for their opinion of doing exams.

Data collection and analysis

Results

Univariate

Bivariate

Content analysis

Content analysis is, as Veal and Ticehurst (2000) describe, technique that has detailed analysis of the content of a certain body of literature, or other documentary sources which are viewed as texts.

Discussion

Conclusion

References:

Bennett, R. (1991), ‘What is management research?’, *The Management Research Handbook,* N. Smith& P. Dainty, Routledge, London, pp. 67-77.

Veal, A.J. and Ticehurst, G.W. 2000, *Business Research Methods A Managerial Approach,* Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest.

Appendix:

(Data Matrix)