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Perceived Learning Environment: A Case of BBA Program at Dhankuta Multiple Campus

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Abstract

Reinvigorating institutions and students in today's competitive global academic and industrial marketplace requires an assessment of the perceived learning environment. Students' academic performance, engagement and success is determined by students' perceived learning environment and academic management from an organization. Descriptive research design is used for the cross-sectional survey study and FGD was organized to assess the perceived learning environment and to compare by gender from students of Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Dhankuta, Nepal. Out of a total of 67 students of the BBA program 35 students have responded through Google from (DREEM Inventory) shared by researchers and 9 students were taken for FGD to find out their perceived environment and learning experiences in the existing environment. It is found that perception on the many aspects among 50 items on the existing environment are more positive than negative. Many aspects of campus learning environment needs to improve. There are insufficient physical facilities at classroom buildings and at hostel as students' need and expectation.

Keywords: learning environment, perception, DREEM Inventory, management

Introduction

Assessment of perceived learning environment is necessary to reinvigorate the institution and students in the present-day hypercompetitive academia industrial global market. A learning environment denotes to the physical, social, and psychological conditions and surroundings where learning activities happen. It covers factors like a classroom setting, teaching methods, student-teacher interactions, peer interactions, teacher-parent interaction availability of physical or online resources, and support systems from institutions that supports or hamper the learning process and outcome. Sometimes the word learning environment is taken as similar words as classroom climate, which is a major dimension of teaching learning evaluation. Classroom climate is well-defined as " a set of generalized attitudes, affective responses, and perceptions related to classroom processes among students" (Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, 1991 p. 351) It can have a substantial impact on students' academic performance, engagement and overall experience. Success and failure of an implemented curriculum determined by educational environment of a particular institution (Taheri, 2009). Perception towards learning environment shapes educational effectiveness. In this article, we try to

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measure students perceived learning environment and identify improvable area. There are three methods for conceptualizing and measuring human environment as relationship, personal development and, system maintenance and system change dimensions, with focusing on organization climate features assessment of social milieus (Moos, 1973). Human functioning or individual behavior is highly impacted by six dimensions associated with ecological, behavior settings, organizational structure, collective personal and/or behavioral characteristics of the residents of a certain environment, variables relevant to the functional analyses of environments in terms of social reinforcement contingencies, and psychosocial characteristics and organizational climate, including in particular perceived social climate (Moos, 1974).

Perception of students towards learning environment plays a vital role in quality assurance of an institution. The student's achievement, success, satisfaction like outcomes are highly correlated with learning environment (Amita Rajesh Ranade et al., 2023; D. Fisher et al., 1995). Students' perception related to learning environment has a substantial impact on their behavior, academic career and sense of well-being (Audin et al., 2003)**.** Perception needs to measure to improve quality and increase satisfaction. Increasing the number of universities and related programmes are forcing them to study about students' quality perception and learning environment. Perceived learning experiences are taken as an important indicator of educational quality basically in higher education. Classroom climate/environment is identified as one of the affecting factors among nine (ability, motivation, age, quality of instruction, quantity of instruction, home environment, peer group, and the time involved or exposure to media) for determining students' cognitive and affective learning outcome (Walberg et al., 2015). Students cognitive, social and affective domain-related outcomes can be maximized if there is a perfect compatibleness between students' preferences and instructional setting (MacAulay, 1990). Explored cognitive, affective and social outcomes may contribute to improving teaching, learning significantly. Understanding the student's needs, convenient system and procedure, quality information system, strong and rewarding service culture, etc. are very significant for quality assurance (Wright & O'Neill, 2002). A study of 144 undergraduate students with linear regression methodology with a mix purpose found that part of learning environment as quality of text books and students face-to-face activities determines student satisfaction towards courses (Popa & Bochis, 2015).

Under the Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University, BBA- Programme has been launched at Dhankuta Multiple Campus since 2020. In this initial phase, it is challenging jobs to meet the student's expectation but to assure quality and meet demand from student and parent perspective it is very relevant as well as significant to identify and measure students' perception towards learning environment of BBA programme. It is necessary to increase academic engagement of students to make them competitive, independently workable and industrious as well as for the institutional success in this extremely competitive academic and industrial industry.

There have been numerous instruments have been practiced to measure perception related to psychosocial learning environment for the classroom like Learning Environment Inventory (LEI), Individualized Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ), Classroom Environment Scale (CES) (D. L. Fisher & Fraser, 1983). Overview of nine major instruments and scales (LEI, CESMCI, , ICEQ, CUCEI, SLEI, QTI, CLES and WIHIC) for classroom environment are presented below:

Table 1

Scales for Measuring Perception Related to Learning Environment

Instrument	Level	Items per Scale	Scales are classified according to Moos's scheme		
			Relationship dimensions	Personal development dimensions	System maintenance and change dimensions
Learning Environment Inventory (LEI)	Secondary	7	Cohesiveness Friction Favoritism Cliqueness Satisfaction Apathy	Speed Difficulty Competitiveness	Diversity Formality Material environment Goal direction Disorganisation Democracy
Classroom Environment Scale (CES)	Secondary	10	Involvement Affiliation Teacher support	Task orientation Competition	Order and organisation Rule clarity Teacher control Innovation
Individualised Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ)	Secondary	10	Personalization Participation	Independence Investigation	Differentiation
My Class Inventory (MCI)	Elementary	6–9	Cohesiveness Friction Satisfaction	Difficulty Competitiveness	
College and University Classroom Environment Inventory (CUCEI)	Higher education	7	Personalization Involvement Student cohesiveness Satisfaction	Task orientation	Innovation Individualisation
Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI)	Secondary/ Primary	8–10	Helpful/friendly Understanding Dissatisfied Admonishing		Leadership Student responsibility and freedom Uncertain Strict
Science Laboratory Environment Inventory (SLEI)	Upper Secondary/ Higher education	7	Student cohesiveness	Open-Endedness Integration	Rule clarity Material environment
Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES)	Secondary	7	Personal relevance Uncertainty	Critical voice Shared control	Student negotiation
What Is Happening In This Classroom (WIHIC)	Secondary	8	Student cohesiveness Teacher support Involvement	Investigation Task orientation Cooperation	Equity

Adopted from (Fraser, B, 1998)

Beside from many instruments, the Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure (DREEM) is taken as refined form of established instruments but it is found that it has been widely used in medical education sector. DREEM is universally validated inventory tools to assess quality of educational environment (Yehia & Gaber, 2012). Through a systematic review of data of 20 countries in 40 publications, it has been found that DREEM has been used in evaluation of programmes, comparison between separate groups (level, gender, institutions) and comparison and identification of actual and expected environment but having inconsistencies and variation in use (Miles et al., 2012).

Students' attraction and retaining process are also determined by perceived learning environment. The role of higher educators is changing as educational managers in the competitive context. To find students perception and compare on the basis of gender were the main objectives of the study. Study of perceived learning environments can help to explore improvable sectors of physical environment, curriculum, personality development aspects of students, their need and expectation and educational delivery. Expected students' outcome highly depend upon created learning environment.

Methods and Materials

Descriptive research design is used for the cross-sectional survey study to assess the perceived learning environment from students. Among 67 total students from BBA programme (22 from first, 17 from second and 28 from the fourth semester) 35 students (15 are from the first semester, 8 from the second semester and 12 from the fourth semester) have responded. Google form was developed to measure the perception of students towards learning environment based on validated DREEM questionnaires and two hours' issues and content dissemination programme was organized at BBA class building to disseminate research content and area and about the survey form before sending the mail. E-mail addresses were collected from BBA Coordinator office after taking consent from students. Google form was mailed to all students' e-mail address and resend remainder e-mail after 10 days for those who did not respond and again next reminder e-mail was sent for remained respondents. It was approached at least three times and waited for 25 days with the hope of all students' participation in the survey with options for voluntary participation. On the basis of result of their internal exam 9 students (poor, average and excellent) were selected for FGD to reach near truth. Collected data is analyzed using various statistical tools with the help of EpiData v4.6.0.6 and SPSS software v. 27

Oral informed consent was obtained from Dhankuta Multiple Campus administration related to BBA program and written consent was taken from each of the participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and there was consent form for interested participants with providing the option to participate and to leave at any stage.

Table 2

Details on Methods

Research questions	Analysis Method	Source of Data	Data Collection Tools
How BBA students are perceiving the various dimensions of learning environment at Dhankuta Multiple Campus?	Descriptive statistics	Likert Scale data collected from University Students	DREEM Questionnaire and FGD

Is there any gender difference on perception on learning environment?	independent t-test	DREEM Questionnaire and FGD

DREEM (Dundee Ready Education Environment Measure) inventory

Roff et.al. (1997) have developed 50 items tools to measure the quality of educational environment. The DREEM Inventory consists total score of 200 for various dimensions associated to learning environment with 50 items to response. Each item is measured using likert scale with a score range of 0-4; where 0 is the lowest and 4 is the highest response score. Here, we have taken a 5-point scale, where, *0= Strongly Disagree, 1= Disagree, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree and 4= Strongly Agree.* This question incorporates 9 negative items (Items 4, 8, 9, 17, 25, 35, 39, 48 and 50), higher scores indicating disagreement on these items. Interpretation of the overall DREEM score is done as 0-50, very poor; 51-100, many problems; 101-150, more positive than negative; and 151-200, excellent. For indicating the different dimensions of the educational environment, the DREEM items are grouped into 5 sub-scales (Taheri, 2009):

Table 3

Dimensions of DREEM Inventory

Dimensions	No. of Items	Max. Score	Satisfactory Score
Students' Perception of Learning (SPoL)	12	48	24
Students' Perception of Teaching (SPoT)	11	44	22
Students' Academic Self Perception (SASP)	8	32	16
Students' Perception of Atmosphere (SPoA)	12	48	24
Students' Social Self-Perception (SSSP)	7	28	14

Adapted from (Taheri, 2009)

To find out more specific poor and strong aspects within the learning environment at DMC, items with a mean score of ≥ 3 were taken as positive points and items having a mean score of ≤ 2 indicate problem areas, which should be examined and worked over more closely. The aspects of the educational environment that could be improved are represented by the items that have a mean score between 2 and 3.

Result and Discussion

On the basis of 35 received responses of Google forms-based survey related to various dimensions of educational environment among 67 students of Dhankuta Multiple Campus, we have analyzed and discuss in this section. Response rates by semester was found by the first semester 15/21 (71.4%) Second semester 8/24 (33.3%) and Forth Semester 12/30 (40.0%). Basic background characteristics of students can play a significant role in expectation and attitude so the details related to background information is presented below.

Table 4

Demographic Details of Respondents

Baseline Characteristics	N	%
Sex		
Female	22	62.9
Male	13	37.1
Religion		
Hindu	32	91.4
Buddha	1	2.9
Kirat	1	2.9
Muslim	1	2.9
Ethnicity		
Chhetri	18	51.4
Brahmin	7	20.0
Magar	2	5.7
Newar	2	5.7
Bhujel	1	2.9
Kami	1	2.9
Limbu	1	2.9
Muslim	1	2.9
Rai	1	2.9
Sherpa	1	2.9
Mother Tongue		
Nepali	33	94.3
Magar	1	2.9
Maithali	1	2.9
Semester		
First	15	42.9
Second	8	22.9
Fourth	12	34.3
Accommodation		
Hosteler	4	11.4
Own Home	14	40.0
Rent Room	17	48.6

Note. $N = 35$

Perceptions and reactions towards any environment are influenced by persons of socio-cultural background, gender, age, previous knowledge, economic status, etc. There is a majority of female, Hindu religion followers and Chhetri ethnic group students as well as rent rooms dwellers that can be taken as dimensions of created environment along with learning climate. Table reveals that there is a variety of ethnic groups, religions, academic level may impact on expected and actual learning environment perception.

Table 5

The DREEM global and Subscale for Dhankuta Multiple Campus (DMC)

SubScales	Maximum Score	Mean	SD
Students' Perception of Learning (SPoL)	48	31.4	8.98
Students' Perception of Teaching (SPoT)	44	25.8	10.56
Students' Academic Self Perception (SASP)	32	20.6	6.36
Students' Perception of Atmosphere (SPoA)	48	28.26	11.40
Students' Social Self-Perception (SSSP)	28	15.43	6.41

Among 67 total students, 35 have replied to the Google form questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 52.23%. Table 1 reveals that the DREEM global and subscale mean scores and standard deviation for the program at DMC. The global score is 121.49 out of a total Score of 200 (SD 43.70). The global score denotes that the students of BBA programme of DMC perceive the educational environment as they are more positive than negative. The total mean score for SPoL was 31.40 out of 48 (SD 8.98); SPoT was 25.80 (SD 10.56); SASP was 20.60 (SD 6.36); and SPoA was 28.26 (SD 11.40); SSSP was 15.43 (SD 6.41). From this, it can be seen that, the students have perceived the existing educational environment of DMC as favorable for all the 5 subscales of DREEM analysis.

Table 6

Particular Item Analysis of DREEM by Different Subscales

Group and Subscales	Mean	SD
A. Students' Perception of Learning (SPoL, Max. Score-48)		
1) I am encouraged to participate during teaching session	2.91	0.612
7) The teaching is often stimulating	2.29	0.789
13) The teaching is student centered	2.40	0.914
16) The teaching helps to develop my competence	2.83	0.785
20) The teaching is well focused	2.66	0.838
22) The teaching helps to develop my confidence	2.89	0.796
24) The teaching time is put to good use	2.49	0.853
25) The teaching over emphasizes factual learning*	2.63	0.490
38) I am clear about the learning objectives of the program	2.80	0.677
44) The teaching encourages me to be an active learner	2.94	0.639
47) Long-term learning is emphasized over short-term learning	2.51	0.781
48) The teaching is too teacher centered*	2.06	0.802
Total Mean Score	**31.40**	**8.98**
B. Students' Perception of Teaching (SPoT, Max. Score 44)		
2) The program organizers are knowledgeable	3.03	0.514
6) The lectures emphasize student care during the teaching sessions?	2.71	0.860
8) Do teachers ridicule the registrars?*	2.00	1.000
9) The teachers are authoritaran*	2.00	1.000
18) The teachers have good communication skills with the students	2.80	1.232
29) The teachers are good at providing feedback to students	2.51	1.147
32) The teachers provide constructive criticism here	2.11	1.022
37) The teachers give clear examples	2.69	0.718
39) *The teachers get angry in teaching sessions**	1.71	1.226
40) The teachers are well prepared for their teaching sessions	2.83	0.923
50) *The students irritate the course organizers/ Teachers/Administration**	1.40	0.914
Total Mean Score	**25.80**	**10.56**
C. Students' Academic Self Perception (SASP, Max. Score 32)		
5) Learning strategies which worked for me before continue to work for me now	2.54	0.657
10) I am confident about my passing this year	2.54	0.950
21) I feel I am being well prepared for my profession	2.60	0.881
26) Last year's work has been a good preparation for this year's work	2.54	0.780
27) I am able to memorize all I need	2.14	0.974

31) I have learnt a lot about empathy in my profession	2.51	0.781
41) My problem-solving skills are being well developed here	2.86	0.692
45) Much of what I have to learn seems relevant to a career in the society	2.86	0.648
Total Mean Score	**20.60**	**6.36**
D. Students' Perception of Atmosphere (SPoA, Max. Score 48)		
11) The atmosphere is relaxed during teaching sessions.	2.37	1.140
12) This program is well timetabled	2.11	1.183
17) *Cheating is a problem on this program**	1.89	1.278
23) The atmosphere is relaxed during lectures	2.54	1.010
30) There are opportunities for me to develop interpersonal skills	2.86	0.648
33) I feel comfortable in class socially	2.66	0.968
34) The atmosphere is relaxed during seminars / tutorials	2.43	1.037
35) *I find the experience disappointing**	1.54	0.919
36) I am able to concentrate well	2.66	0.838
42) *The enjoyment outweighs the stress of the program*	1.51	1.011
43) The atmosphere motivates me as a learner	2.77	0.547
49) I feel able to ask the questions I want	2.91	0.818
Total Mean Score	**28.26**	**11.40**
E. Students' Social Self-Perception (SSSP, Max. Score 28)		
3) There is a good support system for students who get stressed	2.23	0.942
4) *I am too tired to enjoy the course**	1.57	1.037
14) *I am rarely bored on this program*	1.57	0.979
15) I have good friends on this program	2.89	0.993
19) My social life is good	2.54	0.817
28) *I seldom feel lonely*.	1.94	1.110
46) My accommodation is pleasant	2.69	0.530
Total Mean Score	**15.43**	**6.41**

Note. *: negative item; italic: item scored 2 or less; italic*: low-scored negative item

Table 5 depicts the analysis of individual items of DREEM inventory in line with the 5 distinct subscales. For the SPoL subscale items, responses to all the 12 items have a score between 2.00 and 3.00, which indicates that the educational environment for the students has areas that can be enhanced to improve the perception of the learning environment of DMC students. The mean score for Item 44 *(related to encouragement as an active learner)* was 2.94 (SD 0.781), which indicates that the students agreed with the statement. Item 1 *(related to encouragement to participate during the teaching session)* was 2.91 (SD 0.612), indicating the active participation of students during teaching hours. Item 48 *(related to teachers' teacher-centered method)* was 2.06 (SD 0.802), meaning the perception of students is closer to 2, unsure of the Item. Another 9 items have a mean score between 2 and 3, indicating the areas that can be improved.

On analyzing independent items of SPoT subscale, Item 3 *(the program organizers are knowledgeable)* was 3.03 (SD 0.514), indicating the positive perception on teaching environment. Item 39 *(related to the teacher's angriness in teaching sessions)* and 50 *(Related to the creation of irritation by students to the course organizers/Teachers/ Administration)* scored 1.71 (SD 1.226) and 1.40 (SD 0.914) respectively. The negative response to negative statement indicates that the students do not agree to this statement. The other 5 items have a

response between 2 and 3, indicating a field that could be enhanced. However, students were unsure about Item *8 (do teachers ridicule the registrars?)* and 9 *(the teachers are authoritarian),* which scored 2.0 (SD 1). Out of the 8 items of SSAP modules, the calculated scores appear between 2 and 3, indicating the areas in this domain that could be improved for the expected learning environment.

Negative Items no. 17 *(Related to Cheating problem on the program)* and no. 35 *(related to the experience of disappointment)* of SPoA subscale, has a low score of 1.89 (SD 1.278) and 1.54 (SD 0.919) respectively, which means that the statement is not fully agreed by the students. Item no. 42 *(the enjoyment outweighs the stress of the program)* scored 1.51 (SD 1.011), shows that the educational atmosphere is not effective enough to overcome the stress of the program. Remaining 9 items having response rates between 2 and 3 so the related area needed to be improved.

According to the SSSP subscale analysis, there is a problem area in relation with item 4 *(I am too tired to enjoy the course),* 14 *(I am rarely bored on this program)* and 28 *(I seldom feel lonely)* has scores of 1.57 (SD 1.037), 1.57(SD 0.979) and 1.94 (SD 1.110) respectively, which indicates that the students' social self-perception is positive. The other 4 items scored between 2 and 3, signifying a necessity for further improvements.

Among 50 questionnaires items used on our DREEM inventory, mean score between 2 and 3 for 41 items that can be strengthened to improve the educational environment at DMC. In total, 8 items scored below 2.00, out of which there were 7 negative items; so only 1 item was actually problematic, where refreshment activities could not exceed the stress caused by the course to the students. Out of our finding, only 1 item with a score of 3.003, was seen to be absolutely positive, of having acquainted program organizers. This shows that with only one absolute positive and absolute negative item, there are many items to be improved in providing encouraging educational environment to the students of BBA and faculty of DMC.

Students seems happy and satisfied in terms of peaceful environment and interactive environment with teachers even they have some more expectation in terms of responses and support from administrative staff, library staff as well as they shared their demand to administration related to canteen facilities in the periphery, more sanitation facilities at restroom, some more facilities in terms of library and hostels (internet, drinking water, etc.) at FGD.

Gender Difference on Perception

To find out the gender difference on perception of learning environment test result associated to independent sampled t-tests showed that there is a significant difference between the perception of male and female on the teachers give clear examples (SPoT, 37) Long-term learning is emphasized over short-term learning (SPoL, 47). On the basis female ($\bar{X}$= 2.50, σ= 0.740) and male ($\bar{X} = 3, \sigma = 0.577$); $Conditions: t(33 = -2.085,\ p - Value = 0.045 < 0.05$ and female ($\bar{X}$= 2.73, σ= 0.767) and male ($\bar{X} = 2.15, \sigma = 0.689$); $Conditions: t(33 = 2.216,\ p - Value = 0.034 < 0.05$). Remaining questions among 50 questionnaires have no significant difference or there is no difference between perceived learning environment among male and female.

Conclusion

Perceived learning environment is found more positive than negative in the context of BBA program at Dhankuta Multiple Campus even students have some demand and expectation from institutional authority. There is more or less equality in perceived learning environment i.e., Gender background did not play any significant role in terms of perceiving the learning

environment. We may assume it as a hopeful environment in the initial phase. Campus administration needs to pay some more attention for the proper management of basic physical (canteen, wifi service, sanitary materials) and academic facilities (materials availability at the library, provision of guest lectures) to meet the expectation and to support enterprising, competitive in demand manpower for the future.

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