

## Case Study

# A Survey on the Study and Life Difficulties of the First-Year Students at BVU

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## Abstract

This study examines what the first-year students have difficulties in their study and life. A descriptive research is used by using a questionnaire of 9 groups with 37 questions to survey 100 first-year students. The results of this paper show that most difficulties they meet are their learning styles and learning motivation. They also face with problems of the timetable, materials for learning, and the speed of teachers explanation.

**Keywords:** *Difficulty, Learning styles, First-year.*

## Introduction

BVU is developing rapidly and has good words of mouth from society and students who have been studying at this university. Nowadays, the university is modernized its furniture to satisfy students' needs. The university also has a lot of good teachers to ensure its teaching quality.

Therefore, the university accepts thousands of new local students every year. This is the sign of real development of the university. However, with the new students, who have just come from high schools, certainly have a change of learning styles because of the differences between high schools and the university. This change may make the new students feel confused. If they are not well-adapted or well-prepared, they can face with many difficulties and challenges in their life and study. These problems might influence on their learning interests and results.

The first-year students often have no much experiential life, they are used to being looked after under their family and they do not need to worry about anything in their life. However, they start having independent life at the campus now, they must take care of everything for their life, such as accommodation, finance, friends, study, etc.,

The first-year students are studying English in business and pedagogy at BVU, they also meet many troubles with our life and study.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the life and study difficulties of first-year students at BVU in order to help the university acquire and have suitable policies for them. This paper also gives the students recommendations to help them overcome their difficulties.

## The Significance of the Study

It is said that first-year students' difficulties are crucial factors which may influence on their study and life because this is the first time they are far away from their home and have an independent life.

If they have any seriously wrong decision, they may tend to think of negative views, so this paper does not only help the students give themselves solutions but also help the university minimize a number of students' dropout and improve its learning and teaching effectiveness.

## The Aim of the Study

Firstly, we investigate and analyze which difficulties the first-year students may meet, then give them solutions and recommendations to overcome these difficulties.

Secondly, we consider which difficulties have direct influence on their study and life.

Finally, we also have some recommendations to the university to help them feel enjoyment of learning.

## A Short Overview of the First-Year Students

According to our observation from the first semester, we saw that some students who can adopt easily how to learn effectively, but there are a number of students who cannot adopt well how to study effectively. It means that many students feel hard to match for teachers' teaching ways.

Active students feel enjoyable teaching styles at the university, but passive students feel to have big problems because they are used to learning by passive ways at high schools. It means that experiences of learning may influence on their learning conceptions. If they study by surface approach, they can only focus on accumulating unrelated factual knowledge and learning by rote without reflecting on its meaning. On the other hand, if they study by deep approach, they often seek meanings in the material that they are being learned and transform it into a personal understanding. They tend to look for principles and examine new knowledge when learning.

## Research Questions

- What difficulties in their life and study do the first-year students encounter?
- What difficulties in their life and study are the most serious for the first-year students?
- What recommendations can help them overcome the problems?

**Table 1: Results of the survey**

Items	Difficulties	Answer	
		Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Learning time	The class starts early (7:00 and 13:00)	21	79
	The timetable is suitable	21	79
credit registration	Credit registration is complex	37	63
contents of the subjects	Contents of the subjects are difficult	43	57
	Too much new knowledge to catch	42	56
	Lessons are a lot of theories	17	83
teaching styles	Boring teaching styles	39	61
	Teachers prepare lessons well	78	22
	Teachers do not motivate students to learn	43	57
	Teachers explain lessons very fast	67	33
	Teachers do not help students study	24	76
	Teachers stop to go to classes without any notice	15	85
learning styles	Teachers' requirements for their subjects are too high	45	55
	It's hard to adapt new teaching styles	78	22
	You do not have any good self-study methods	84	16
	You don't know how to study in groups	64	36
	You don't know how to give an presentation	64	36
	You don't know how to make a suitable plan	82	18

## Research Design

A descriptive study with questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was used to find out difficulties that the first-year students have. The study was carried out at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University. Following is the description of the participants, the instruments used, and the questionnaire for students.

## Participants

The samples consist of 100 students randomly chosen from classes of the first-year English major students. The samples include 20 males (20%) and 80 females (80%). They volunteer to take part in this survey.

## The Instruments

The questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data for this paper. The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese and delivered to participants for their completely understanding, then we used Microsoft Office Excel to analyze the results of the questionnaire.

## Questionnaire for Students

The students' version of questionnaire consists of two sections:

The first section is to ask students' gender. The second section used 37 questions to survey the first-year students' difficulties. 9 groups of questions are time to learn, credit registration, contents of the subjects, teaching styles, learning styles, learning spirit, examination, equipment, and family. The questionnaire is showed on appendix 2.

## Results

	You are not clear about subjects	49	51
	You have a low thinking ability	48	52
	You'd like to listen rather than speak and write	39	61
learning motivation	You are lazy to study	79	21
	You don't focus on lessons	86	14
	You are lack of discipline	86	14
	You'd like to play rather than study	73	27
	You don't feel self-confident	84	16
	You don't visit class regularly	48	52
examination	Difficult tests/examinations	36	64
	Tests are not interesting	65	35
	Unstable schedule	23	77
equipment	Lack of learning materials	68	32
	The library doesn't have right books	62	38
	Uncomfortable dorm	15	85
	Unstable wireless	87	13
family	Lack of interest in your study	34	66
	Not giving you enough finance for studying and living	21	79
	Parents don't give everything you like	25	75

To clarify the results, we answer the first question 'what difficulties in their life and study do the first-year students encounter?'

First, the finding of learning time shows 79% of the students disagree that the class time starts early. It means that 79% of the students feel satisfied of the learning time. However, they do not feel happy with the timetable because the same number of the students disagree that timetable is suitable for them.

Second, the finding of credit registration presents 63% of the students disagree the complexity of credit registration.

Third, the finding of contents of the subject states under a half of the students (42%) agree that contents of the subjects are difficult and there is such much new knowledge that they cannot catch it.

Next, the finding of teaching styles shows under three quarters of the students (67%) agree that teachers explain their lessons too fast for them to understand. Nearly a half of the students (45%) agree their teachers' requirements for their subjects are too high to adapt.

Then, the finding of learning styles presents 78% the students find hard to adapt new teaching styles, 84% of them don't have any good self-study methods, nearly two thirds of the students (64%) don't know how to study in groups or give an presentation, and make a suitable plan with 82%. A half of the

students agree that they have low thinking ability and they are not clear about subjects.

After this, the finding of learning motivation shows that over three quarters of the students are lazy, lack of discipline, they don't focus on lessons, feel self-confident, and like to study. However, under a half of the students (48%) say that they don't visit their classes regularly.

Following, the finding of examination reflects 65% of the students agree that tests are not interesting while under three quarters of the students (64%) disagree tests are difficult.

Also, the finding of equipment shows two thirds of the students agree that they are lack of learning materials and the library doesn't have right books for them to study. However, over 80% of the students feel satisfied with the comfortable dorm and stable wireless.

Final, the finding of family presents over two thirds of the students feel that their family is interested in their study and life.

The sum of the first-year students' difficulties, we answer the second question 'what difficulties in their life and study are the most serious for the first-year students?'

The results above show that almost all difficulties they meet are their learning styles and learning motivation. They also face with problems of the timetable, materials for learning, and the speed of teachers explanation [1-4].

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The first-year students face with many difficulties in their learning namely learning styles and learning motivation, so we suggest some following recommendations.

First of all, the first-year students should have real goals of their learning to succeed in their study. To get these goals, the students must study hard and find the best learning ways and especially avoid taking part in personal activities without involving in learning. They should balance between their leisure activities and learning time.

## References

- 1 Barner et al. (2008) An active learning handbook. Open University Press. England.
- 2 Brookhart (2001) How to give effective feedback to your students. Alexandria. Virginia USA.
- 3 Maeroff (2003) A classroom of one. Palgrave Macmillan. New York
- 4 Michael (2003) Active learning in secondary and college science classroom. Mahwah, New Jersey. London.

Secondly, teachers should give easy aims for the students to study and explain the lessons carefully and slowly so that the students can acquire the lessons better. Also, they should motivate the students how to study more effectively and organize some projects to help them join and improve their skills and knowledge. Through the projects, they can discover themselves something good and suitable with them.

Last but not least, the administration office should have a suitable timetable for the students in order to help them feel pleasant to make their plans.