

Factors involved in students dropping out of Moroccan universities

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Abstract

This study is related to the VOLUBILIS project "Moroccan and European students: a comparative approach", which aims to identify the challenges and expectations of Moroccan students.

The purpose of this research is to provide information about the course of study and factors leading to students abandoning their studies at University Hassan II of Casablanca.

350 students participated in the survey. Their average age is 22 years and they have no physical or mental disability.

Our results indicate that the students have great difficulties succeeding in their academic career, and they decide to drop out after a short time at the university.

Keywords: Factors leading to abandoning, Moroccan University, academic career, academic achievement

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1. Introduction

School failure and drop-out phenomena at University are major challenges for public higher education institutions around the world. Indeed, the phenomena of mass access to higher education that began in the 80s are still currently leading universities to take in new types of students. This greeting was accompanied by a phenomenon of failure and massive drop-out rates particularly in the first year.

Several studies have been conducted to identify the determinant factors of these failures firstly, to better understand and, secondly, to enable higher education institutions to combat this phenomena.

Every year, a large number of students have difficulties succeeding in their academic career. And most of them drop out of the university definitively.

The establishing of an educational reform (introduction of the LMD system) in 2003 and the operationalization of an emergency plan (2009-13 / Project 21: introduction of an information system and efficient orientation) aims to focus on university students (through teaching approaches, hospitality, information, guidance, student satisfaction, etc.), the goal of this reform was to resolve the problem of drop-out students.

2. The role of educational models in the interpretation and reading of the failure and drop-out rates at university

Tinto's model postulates that various factors influence the student's decision to continue or stop his/her studies. According to Tinto, Abandoning University studies is performed by examining the integration of the student into the institution and its commitment to its academic community.

According Tinto 1975: "Students come to university with some pre-admission characteristics, such as family background (family type, responsibility, family income, etc.), personal characteristics (personality, professional skills, etc.) and previous school experiences (training, diploma, academic skills, etc.). Pre-admission characteristics are mainly related to the student's specific objectives during his/her engagement in a training project». (Quoted by SAMI-Perseverance, June 2007, p.35).

According to Grayson (2003), the student's goals can be educational or professional. The educational objective is to develop and improve the level of learning of the student, something that promotes the personal satisfaction of the individual.

The agreement of the student with the academic and social environment is vital to the will of the students to persevere or abandon. According Dubeau, Renou and Amyot (1994) "The re-valuation of the correlation between the student project and the conditions of the institutional environment will lead to the decision to continue or abandon his studies" (Quoted by SAMI-Perseverance, June 2007).

Various researchers have criticized Tinto's model (1975), which pushed Tinto (1993) to add two new concepts namely: external commitments and institutional experience.

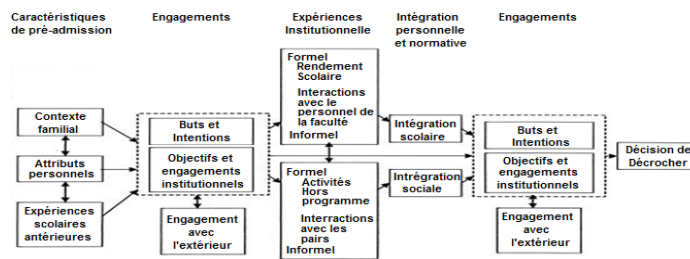


Figure 2: Mapping the revised model of integrating students Tinto (1993) as shown by DeRemer (2002), Liu (2002) and Titus (2003).

In terms of external commitments Tinto (1993), declare that the effect of being married or an employee will affect the goals and desires of the student. External commitments will be considered as explanatory factors of abandonment.

For formal and informal interactions: the relationship with the training is done in a formal way (academic performance, intellectual development) and, in other cases, informally (interaction with professors, administrative personnel).

Tinto said that learning is the result of the integration of the student so formally or informally, since the integration is considered a motivating factor of the individual to make more effort to learn and get the degree. Similarly, the quality of interaction between teachers and colleagues will support the integration of the student at university.

To summarize, we can say that the integration and interaction will influence the student's decision to persevere or abandon his academic achievement.

The theories of Bean (1985) underline the influence of external characteristics, such as family encouragement and financial difficulties etc. on student behavior, as well as its intention and determination to persevere. For Bean, we can say that the intention of the student to persevere or abandon the academic achievement depends mainly on external factors. The Bean Research indicates that performance is an important element in enhancing the decision to continue their studies.

Cabrera research work and colleagues (1992) proposed a model that incorporates factors Tinto and Bean most decisively in the decision to drop out. Thus Cabrera et al., added to the Tinto model three factors from the Bean model namely the encouragement of friends and family, finances and academic performance. For Cabrera, adding the family factor, the finance and academic performance (cited in the Bean model) to components that predict perseverance in the Tinto model (Academic integration, social integration, commitment the institution's commitment to the aims pursued) will allow better understanding of the reasons why students abandon or persevere academic studies.

As we note in the theories of educational models, abandoning studies at university is a complex problem which was examined from different angles.

The problems are revealed in the writings that we have identified. Thus, it was possible to examine the problem of abandonment by various determinants:

- The experience at the university in terms of learning difficulties or poor academic performance in terms of social integration and interaction with other members of the academic community whether peers or body teachers and administrators.
- External factors that may be related to physical characteristics (gender, health, etc.) social (family social environment, financial resources), academic (performance, schooling prior) or psychological (commitment, motivation, self-assessment).

The integration of these models is meant to strengthen the instrumentation in the method and provide strong scientific tools which are able to identify the foundations of the real causes of students dropping out and academic failure at university due to learning disabilities.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The surveyed population consists of third year university students. Our sample consisted of 350 students, representing several disciplines: letters, sciences and Economics.

Table 1. Gender Distribution

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
Female	47	75	47
Male	29	47	11
Total	76	122	58

We found no significant difference between the percentages of male and female students at the faculty of letters, but the discipline of English has more female students than male students (55.2% female, 44.8 % male).

Regarding the faculty of science, male students represent the majority of students in physics and chemistry. However, biology has more female students than male students (9.1% male, 90.9 % female). This may be due to the nature of the discipline: biology requires more individual work (revision, attendance and TD ...) while physics and chemistry involves less class time but more abstraction which could attract male students.

3.2. Measures:

The questionnaire was organized into 7 themes (Soubhi et al., 2014). The analysis focused on the themes of the course of study and of the difficulties of succeeding in an academic career.

3.3. Procedure:

The survey was conducted in November 2011. The questionnaires were distributed to teachers in each discipline, and they were completed by students during a course. The questionnaires were collected by the researcher.

3.4. Analysis:

After data collection, we used SPSS software for data processing and analysis. After data collection, we used SPSS software for data processing and analysis. Our interest in this survey was focused on willingness to study, determining the choice of the discipline, enrolling on a masters, information on the course of study and university life.

4. Willingness to study

We noted that a majority of students (84.8%) expressed that they had a desire to enter higher education. However, the level of this confidence varies and depends on the discipline. Thus, it is higher among students of Economics (only 7% of students who were unwilling or reluctant to study) and reached its minimum in sciences and letters (21% and 14% said they didn't have the desire to do study in higher education).

Table 2. Situation before undertaking studies in higher education

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
I did not want to study	02.80%	06.50%	01.50%
I hesitated for a long time	11.10%	14.50%	05.90%
I was pretty sure I wanted to study	38.90%	30.60%	22.10%
From the beginning I was always sure I wanted to study	47.20%	48.40%	70.60%

5. Registration in the discipline of his choice

At university, almost half of the students are enrolled in a discipline that was not their first choice. This rate varies greatly from one discipline to another because it rises to 59% in Economics and only 34% in the letters sector.

However, it's noteworthy that, regardless of the discipline, still more than a third of the students aren't enrolled in the discipline that matched their first choice.

Table 3. The formation in which you registered at the beginning of your graduate studies she matched your career choices?

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
No	33,8%	46,8%	58,8%
Yes	66,2%	53,2%	41,2%

6. Determining the choice of the discipline

At university, students said that they chose their discipline of study firstly according to their hope of having a good income, and according to their personal abilities and interest in the discipline. Other professional prospects seem less important. However, students indicated that the choice of the discipline is determined by the choice of a specific profession and of getting a secure job.

Generally, there is no difference between students from different disciplines in relation to the reasons for which they chose their sector. However, students of Economics accord more importance to the professional prospects, while students of letters and sciences based their choice on interest in the subject and personnel capacity.

We also noted that there is no difference between male and female students for their reason in choosing a discipline.

Table 4. Average magnitudes of various determinants of the choice of discipline (Scale: 0 = not important to 6 = very important)

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
Specific interest in discipline	4.67	4.48	4.34
Personal skills, capacity	4.61	4.56	4.39
Hope of a good income	4.76	4.68	5.09
Choice of job	4.53	4.17	4.73
Prospects of getting a secure job	3.75	3.77	4.41
Good chance of becoming manager	4.28	3.93	4.75

Table. 5 Average magnitudes of various determinants of the choice of discipline by gender (scale: 0 = not important to 6 = very important)

	Female	Male
Specific interest in discipline	4,41	4,54
Personal skills, capacity	4,62	4,44
Hope of a good income	4,77	4,68
Choice of job	4,50	4,10
Prospects of getting a secure job	3,87	3,90
Good chance of becoming manager	4,23	4,18

7. Final diploma

Apart from some scientist's students who intend to engineering degrees (12.1%), the terminal level study mentioned by students is either Master or Master Pro (28% of students) is the pro license or license (20, 1%). The level is the only BA envisaged by the students of Economics (100% want to do license or pro license).

Research sectors (Master's or Ph.D.) mainly attract science students (36.3%) and also a significant proportion of the literary students (32.2%). They wish also to take the examination for access competition to education (17.2%).

Table. 6 what review or contest graduation are you considering?

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
License	23,2%	13,7%	50,0%
Pro license	4,0%	,8%	50,0%
Master specialized pro	11,1%	14,5%	,0%
Master basic research	15,2%	15,3%	,0%
Engineering degree	1,0%	12,1%	,0%
Competition for access to education	17,2%	14,5%	,0%
Ph.D	14,1%	21,0%	,0%
I don't know	14,1%	8,1%	,0%

8. Enroll in Master's

Our results reported that nearly seven out of ten students wish to enrol in a Master's program; a majority of students indicate that a Master's is considered the minimum level to terminate Higher Education. However, 44.6 % indicated their interest in doing a Master's after a short break. We can conclude that the fact of dropping out is mainly due to the lack of scholarships and financial resources for the students.

Table 7. If you are not currently enrolled in master, what will you do next?

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
No	7.5%	9.1%	9.0%
Yes, after the license	24.0%	9.9%	26.9%
Yes, after short time	32.9%	57.0%	47.8%
So, later, after something else	16.4%	4.1%	6.0%
I don't know	19.2%	19.8%	10.4%

9. Utility of studies

The students have a fairly traditional view of the utility of studies because they mainly see this utility first in the possession of a large culture, development and enrichment of their personal thought then improving their reasoning capacity, then fourth, the acquisition of knowledge in the field of study.

However, in third place we notice that the student's value utility more than studies, this could have result in an increase in the help each individual can bring to others. The students of Economics show the particularity to value, clearly less the other students, the made materially help their families. Finally, the idea that the university would be useful for accessing a privileged social and financial status seems to cleave the students into two groups. Firstly, those who agree with this idea: students of Economics, and, secondly, those for which the usefulness of studies is less marked by these dimensions of access to a social and financial elite: letters and sciences students. Note that all students value the least the idea that the university would be useful for postponing entry into working life.

Analysis of the change in apprehension of the utility of studies by gender shows that female students place significantly more emphasis on it than male students, a personal development according to academic studies. Thus, they attribute higher utility scores than male students to the following dimensions: «cultivate and enrich my personal thought», « become a person with a broader culture », « acquire know-how», « acquire a sense of duty», « take self-confidence», « acquire knowledge of their rights », « achieving a high social position ». However we notice that male students have more will to help materially their family.

Table 8. The studies are useful for me to ... (scale: 0 = not important to 6 = very important)

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
Ensure a good income	3,17	2,89	4,59
Achieve a high social position	4,01	3,91	4,73
Cultivate and enrich my personal thought	4,70	4,72	5,33
Learn more in the chosen field	4,67	4,62	5,10
Receive proper disciplinary training	4,52	4,78	5,03
Become a person with a broader culture	4,90	4,71	5,10
The use of power here and below doesn't sound quite right	5,03	4,78	4,41
Power contribute to the improvement of society	4,66	4,43	4,61
Push as much as possible to enter working life	3,31	2,93	2,89
Develop my ability of expression	5,01	4,34	4,93
Self-confidence	4,66	4,43	4,65
To make friends	3,90	3,30	3,27
Acquire know-how	5,01	4,38	4,88
Acquire knowledge of their rights	4,54	4,14	4,59
Acquire a sense of duty	4,76	4,38	4,57
Learn to reason	4,96	4,72	4,74
Understand society	4,49	4,12	4,51
Help family materially	4,63	4,58	3,95

Table 9. The studies are useful for me to ... by gender (scale: 0 = not important to 6 = very important)

	Female	Male
Ensure a good income	3,52	2,91
Achieve a high social position	4,28	3,75
cultivate and enrich my personal thought	5,06	4,62
Learn more in the chosen field	4,76	4,61
Receive proper disciplinary training	4,80	4,57
Become a person with a broader culture	4,98	4,64
Power help others later	4,79	4,76
Power contribute to the improvement of society	4,49	4,47
Push as much as possible to enter working life	3,08	2,99
Develop my ability of expression	4,79	4,39
Take self-confidence	4,72	4,29
To make friends	3,47	3,36
Acquire know-how	4,77	4,41
Acquire knowledge of their rights	4,60	3,97
Acquire a sense of duty	4,74	4,08
Learn to reason	4,81	4,75
Understand society	4,46	4,25
Help family materially	4,43	4,63

10. Information on courses of study and university life

In general, university students have the feeling of being ill-informed as soon as the subject moves away from the educational aspects (study and examination regulations, integration of ICT in education and teachings). This deficit of information is particularly marked in the field of university development policy (60.3%). In other areas, more or less than one student out of two express their sense of being misinformed about the opportunity to study in other country, to get a scholarship and professional insertion position. A quarter of students reported being less informed about a diploma at Bachelor's and Master's levels. It is interesting to note that there is no difference between male and female students in the evaluation of information.

Table 10. Information on course of study and university life
(Answers "far too little" + "too little" to the question: "How informed do you feel in the following areas? ")

	Letters	Sciences	Economics
Regulations of study and examinations of discipline	35,4%	41,7%	31,3%
Use multimedia / internet in studies and teaching	37.1%	43.2%	33.8%
Possibility of obtaining a scholarship	47.3%	46.6%	63.8%
Opportunity to study abroad	51.2%	53.8%	50.0%
Situation in the labor market for the intended professional field	50.8%	57.9%	34.8%
Level diplomas license and master	35.8%	31.6%	29.0%
Current policy program for the development of the university	57.9%	66.1%	54.5%

Table 11. Lack of information on studies and university life by gender
(Answers "far too little" + "too little" to the question: "How informed do you feel in the following areas? ")

	Female	Male
Regulations of study and examinations of discipline	37,9%	38,1%
Use multimedia / internet in studies and teaching	41,5%	38,6%
Possibility obtaining a scholarship	53,4%	47,6%
Opportunity to study abroad	51,3%	49,4%
Situation in the labor market for the intended professional field	42,8%	60,5%
Level diplomas License and Master's	27,3%	40,2%
Current policy program for the development of university	56,3%	64,6%

11. Discussion

This survey has as its goal the collection of data in factors of abandoning study at University through an investigation within the framework of Volubilis Project Hubert Curien, order to know the major factors which influenced the decision of the students to persevere or abandon academic achievement.

Based on the results of this survey, a majority of students indicate (84.8%) desire to enter higher education. Almost half of the students report that they registered in a discipline which wasn't their choice. The choice of study discipline focuses mainly on the hope of students of having a good income. 28% of students mentioned the Master's or Professional Master's that the terminal level of study, 20, 1% students mentioned the pro license or license. 44.6 % indicated their desire to do a Master's after a short break.

The results of our survey indicate that students considered university a useful way to access a privileged social and financial status. On the other hand, students reported that university would not be useful for their integration into working life. The field of university development policy was characterized by a deficit of information (60.3%).

We can conclude that the factors of dropping out and abandoning academic achievement are principally due to the deficit of information, lack of scholarships, and financial resources for the students.

12. Conclusion

Our results indicate that the majority of students have the wish to receive higher education in a university; different factors determine the choice of subject (knowledge, professional insertion, training apprenticeship....), a majority of students indicated that they don't have scholarships and financial resources. This deficit of resources could be a major cause of students dropping out. Students also reported a lack of communication in university.

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