

# Student attendance and student achievement: a tumultuous and ambiguous couple. A case study of Kigali Institute of Education

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## **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the impact of student attendance and student achievement at Kigali Institute of Education (KIE). Indeed, the variable "attendance" has not been considered in the Senate Probe Committee's report submitted in 2004, and which examined other variables. Yet, the literature review reveals that it impacts positively on student achievement. Therefore, this study investigates critically that key variable in view of KIE's attendance policy and implementation mechanisms with the ultimate objective of verifying if they match with new teaching trends. Thus, it confronts different policies by using information gathered from 21 universities' regulations. It thereafter scrutinizes attendance lists vis-à-vis scores in different modules. Factual results confirm the correlation between student attendance and student achievement despite loopholes observed on the policy side. Nevertheless, there is need to update the policy, to soften implementation mechanisms and to explore non class-based delivery modes by turning new technologies to profit aiming at autonomy and independence since students sometimes must struggle between studies and social or professional responsibilities.*

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**Keywords:** Student attendance, student achievement, correlation, autonomy, independence

## **Introduction**

Education leaders have always had a concern about the effects of certain variables on student achievement or performance at all levels of education. That is the reason why, at the end of the first year of teaching (2000-2001), KIE Senate ordered a survey on students' academic performance. Consequently, a probe committee of 6 academic staff (to which the author was a member) was set up and the report was tabled by the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2001. But it was realized that the problem was bigger than envisaged and would hence require more members and time. The committee was later enlarged to 12 members and was provided ample time to come up with an effective diagnosis of the problem and recommend possible solutions to it (report's preamble). Finally, the report was submitted three years later in January 2004.

At that time, a number of variables were investigated: student's academic background on admission vis-à-vis different programs, subjects offered (two teaching subjects and education), student's interest in the programs, student's numbers in each department, teaching-learning resources (equipment, materials, environment and space for students in each department), methodologies used in teaching-learning process, the language issue, the state of the library, the state of laboratories, the teaching of science and academic staff issues.

Nevertheless, there are other variables that were left out while they have always puzzled educators. These are mainly class attendance, socio-economic status and mobility on which so many studies have been conducted as testified by the rich bibliography presented in Jones' (2006) doctoral thesis as well as Schooley's (2007) recapitulative literature review on the same topic. The latter summarizes the following re-known references: Snell & Melkies, 1995; Saiduddin, 2003; Gump, 2005; Cohn & Johnston, 2006; Easton & Engelhar, 1982; Marburger, 2006; Roby, 2004; *Communicator*, 2006; Riding & Baker, 2003, *Teaching Professor*, 2004; Moore, 2005. All of them agree

that there is a positive correlation between student attendance and final grades and their surveys demonstrated that students who attend class 95% of the time were significantly more likely to earn an A or B grade.

Although attendance has always been a cross-cutting variable and all writers take it as axiomatic that students must be present in school in order to benefit from academic program in its entirety (Jones: 1), it has not been taken into account in the above-mentioned report. Yet, it has become a recurrent issue in further KIE Senate's meetings and the General Academic Regulations (GAR, 2011) clearly stipulate that: "*Attendance to lectures, seminars, practical sessions, etc. is obligatory. Attendance will be monitored as agreed by the Faculty/Centre. Students who attend less than 80 per cent of such sessions shall fail the module with a mark of 30% if their average module grade is 50% or more, or otherwise zero*" (Article, 100).

### ***Aim of the study***

This study aims at investigating the correlation of class attendance with KIE students' academic achievement or performance and making recommendations for practice.

### ***Research questions***

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does attendance impact student achievement?
2. Are absentees necessarily the ones who fail?
3. Are the best performers or most brilliant students necessarily those who attend classes regularly?
4. Do the GAR match with the current trends on teaching, attendance and student achievement issues?

### ***Research hypotheses***

When the study started, the following working hypotheses were outlined:

1. Those who succeed are those who attend class regularly;
2. Those who fail are those who do not attend class regularly;
3. Non attendance might have an impact on the student achievement;
4. The rigidity which characterizes the current GAR vis-à-vis the attendance issue might be anachronistic and no longer viable.

### ***Methodology***

For the purpose of the study, in view of the research questions, a parallel was drawn between the information gathered from attendance lists and mark-sheets. In total, 687 cases were retained from 15 modules but not equally distributed as it is shown in the following table.

Table N°1: Distribution of cases retained by module

Module code	Number of absentees	%
FOE 102	5	0.7
FOE 203 <sup>1</sup>	10	1.5
COE 201 <sup>2</sup>	13	1.9
COE 202	26	3.8
KDA 101	2	0.3
OAM 308	3	0.4
OAM 309	11	1.6
OAM 401	5	0.75
CBS 201	22	3.2
CBS 202	286	41.6
CBS 207	270	39.3
CBS 306	15	2.2
PHY 302	5	0.7
PHY 401	13	1.9
PHY 404	1	0.15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows abundantly big variations among modules in terms of percentages of absentees which will be discussed below in the section related to the discussion of the findings. At this juncture, the question was the objective criteria to define or determine an absentee and student achievement. According to Schooley (2007), quoting the *Webster*, 2003 and Roy, 2004), student attendance is usually defined as the number of days that a student is in school and absent from school and student achievement is based on standardized test scores as well as students' grades.

Besides those general statements, reference was made to the aforementioned GAR's article which has led to a practice consisting in denying the student who does not reach a minimum of 80% of class attendance the right to sit for any exam. But, given the situation of massive absenteeism we were facing, the minimum was lowered to 65%, which is near the 66.7% required for instance by Indraprastha College (University of New Dehli) the last academic year (below that limit, students were simply debarred from taking semester exams).

At the beginning, the attention was focused on big groups where problems were suspected. Without going into the controversy about the concept of "big/large group", since there is no single definition, was considered as big as any group beyond fifty students. This was a medium position between some references. For example, for T. J. Griffin et al. (quoting Alford & Klein, 1989 and Turquet, 1975), "groups are defined as large groups when it becomes impossible for each group member to maintain eye-to-eye contact". For Gilmore & Barnett (1992, cited also by Griffin & al.), "large group dynamics begin once a group exceeds 15 to 20 participants". In Griffith University's guidelines on "Teaching Large Classes: Challenges and Strategies", a large class is meant to have 100 students and more,

<sup>1</sup>Wrongly recorded as FOE 102

<sup>2</sup>Wrongly recorded as COE 102

knowing that in some cases, “large” may signify a class of 50-70 students and in others, a class having up to 1500 students in a single cohort (first years).

### *Data collection*

Data for this study were collected from the 2011-2012 academic year attendance lists and mark-sheets. Initially, the sampling targeted two modules by subject; but, afterwards, it was discovered that there were so many limitations about attendance lists which constituted the main part and the main source of information:

- some lecturers recognized that they never take the attendance simply because they are not convinced of the rightfulness of that operation or have never experienced such a thing during their own degree course or academic life;
- others have abandoned the system because they have realized that students sign for their classmates, especially in big groups;
- some lists were not filled in systematically and others were unexploitable because they were made of separate sheets of papers, with completely mixed up numbers, which could not allow a horizontal reading;
- mistrust vis-à-vis the findings of the study and their possible exploitation by administration;
- some lecturers have left KIE for further studies;
- some lists had been misplaced and could not be found;
- some lists from different modules were completely mixed up and it was difficult to know which is which;
- where a module was taught by more than one person, only one list could be found, complete and exploitable in most of the cases;

Marks of Foundation Language and Communication Skills modules for evening programmes could not be traced between the teaching faculty and the faculty they belong to.

In order to circumvent all those obstacles, it was decided to exploit mainly, but not limited to, the huge pile of attendance lists submitted for payment to the administration office by part time lecturers who taught in evening programs.

At a first level, there was a conviction that, theoretically, they were more complete and trustworthy. At a second level, the survey was limited to modules other than education modules of day program since Ndizeye had explored that area in his research project (KIE, 2009). At a third level, mainly evening program modules were targeted, the rationale being that the study should be dealing with mature students whose perceptions, motivations, sense of responsibility and attitudes vis-à-vis attendance could differ.

In principle, there was a conviction that KIE should learn from others. That is why 21 universities' websites from different corners of the world were randomly visited in order to have an overview of their practices and perception of the importance of student attendance. The summary for each institution will be presented below and an overall discussion made in light of reputed researchers' views.

### *Findings*

After having deeply scrutinized, cross-checked (where possible) and authenticated each signature on attendance lists of big groups which are seen in Commerce, Business Studies and Communication Skills modules, there was initially the impression of having made a good diagnosis since it allowed to detect and isolate five types of situations or cases:

1. Those who seemed to have never attended and had failed;
2. Those who seemed to have never attended but had achieved quite satisfactory scores or even very high scores;
3. Those who seemed to have never attended or had just satisfactory attendance and had failed;
4. Those who seemed to have never attended and did not appear on the mark-sheets;
5. Those who never attended and had no mark.

Finally, the research unexpectedly faced the facts: the reality was that no attendance list of groups where so many cases of type 2 were detected was reliable, except those of three modules of physics, namely PHY 302, PHY 401 and PHY 404. Indeed, the situation was inextricable: visibly, a small number of students was attending and simply signing for others. For instance, there could be a set of six or eight signatures on the first sheet and a totally different set of six or eight signatures on the second one for the same student. The hoax or the tactics consisted simply in avoiding putting them closer, but the funniest was that a student could have different signatures for a set of 20 days or even more. At that moment, the following questions arose:

1. Were the marks "cooked" by lecturers?
2. Are KIE students so brilliant to the extent that they do not need to attend class?
3. Was any control made to insure that lists were filled in properly?
4. Which method was used for filling them in?

Obviously, no satisfactory answer could be found given the fact that most of those lecturers were external part timers who had no moral obligation to answer those questions. That is the reason why the study did not venture further, knowing that it could have revealed so many things beyond our powers which could only be investigated by an administrative and competent organ with coercive powers.

Therefore, the ultimate questions were the following:

1. How come that a student did not attend class but passed with sometimes very high scores (e.g. 83% in CBS 207) knowing that, according to the cited report (point 1.3: "Students Entrance Points to KIE"), most of the students who perform well are admitted elsewhere?
2. Were assessment principles, regulations and ethics followed as required?
3. What were the roles and the responsibility of instructors in that situation?

Finally, table n°1 above (Distribution of cases retained by module) revealed that the biggest number of absentees is concentrated in only two modules. These are CBS 202 (41.6%) and CBS 207 (39.3%), in total 80.9%. The detailed statistical figures are presented in the table below.

Table n°2: Statistical figures of absenteeism for CBS 202 and CBS 207

Interval (marks)	CBS 202 (286 absentees)	%	CBS 207 (270 absentees)	%
50-59	119	41.6	89	33
60-69	25	8.7	54	20
70-79	7	2.5	21	7.8
80-89	2	0.7	3	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>61.9</b>

This means that 53.5% and 61.9% of students passed respectively CBS 202 and CBS 207 without having attended at all or with very poor attendance, which contradicts so many studies which demonstrate a correlation between class attendance and academic performance (Cleary-Holdforth, 2007). But more absurd is that 39.3% of those who have been considered as absentees for CBS 270 have marks but even their numbers do not appear on the printed attendance list. This means that even the list used for roll call was incomplete or inappropriate. Then the questions were raised: who provides the lists? Is he/she aware of the situation? Do lecturers have time to detect it? Do they care? Obviously, somehow, somewhere, the roll call mechanisms are questionable.

More instructive in almost all the investigated modules is that 100% of those who failed are precisely the ones who are absentees (e.g. CBS 202 and CBS 207); which answers our first and second research questions. Note that, even where this does not apply in a particular module whilst it applies in many others for the same student, there was a tendency to think that the case falls under signatures which might have been put by friends. It also answers the third one in general though some extreme cases have been observed where entire big groups assimilated to absent have passed a module (or modules) with very high scores without having attended regularly or even at all (statistics above) though the so-called signatures existed.

Regarding assessment principles, regulations and ethics, there would have been a wish to know why all those students have not been denied the right of being eligible for exams in the light of the practice derived from the cited article. This needs a deeper investigation. At this juncture, it is important to present in the table below the findings related to other institutions' practices and perception of student's attendance and achievement. Thereafter, they will be discussed as a way of paving KIE's path.

Table n°3: Summary of practices and perception of the importance of student attendance worldwide

N°	University	Requirements (eventually with quantification)	Mechanisms for implementation and supervision or control & penalties
1	Kigali Institute of Education (KIE, Rwanda)	-Attendance compulsory for all lectures, seminars, practical sessions, etc. At least 80% of lectures, practicals & tests -Minimum: 80%	Less than 80%: the student fails the module with a mark of 30% if the average module grade is 50% or more, or otherwise zero
2	Université Libre de Kigali (ULK, Rwanda)	See KIE	See KIE

3	National University of Rwanda (NUR)	See KIE	See KIE
4	Institut International de Management (IIM/Cnam, Paris)	-Arriving at school not later than the first day and not leaving before the last day; -Attendance to all face-to-face courses, examinations, internship and project research meetings: "absolutely" compulsory; -Absence is declared after completion of roll call; -Being more than 15 minutes late or leaving class earlier counts as an absence;	-To sign the name on the attendance list for each class; -Warning for those with poor attendance and expulsion (even without warning) from final examination for continued poor attendance cases; -Strict attendance is required for both academic and student visa purposes;
5	Makerere University (Uganda)	Attendance of scheduled courses of instruction is compulsory. These include, but are not limited to, lecture, seminar, practical, examination, test and internship;	-
6	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya)	-	-
7	University of Nairobi-School of Commerce (Kenya)	-	-
8	East Carolina University (USA)	Punctual attendance to lectures, laboratory sessions, and field experiences and participation in course assignments and activities are compulsory	-Class attendance may be a criterion in determining a student's final grade -Responsibility of the student to notify the instructor immediately about class absences, to provide appropriate documentation for an absence, and discuss any missed class time, tests, or assignments;
8	University of Dar Es Salaam (Tanzania)	Laconic: "Students are required to attend classes as per the timetable".	-Every student will be required to sign an attendance register for each period; -If a student doesn't attend class for three weeks without satisfactory reason, he/she will be required to repeat the semester;
9	Marquette University (USA)	-Students are expected to attend and be on time for all sessions of a course for which they are registered; -The College of Business Administration does not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences;	-Instructors MAY include class attendance as a measure of academic performance; -Absences MAY result in consequences for the student. -If a student has absences in hours greater than two weeks of class periods (3 absences for a one-day

			per week course, 5 absences for a two-day per week course, 7 for a three-day per week course) she/he may be dropped earning a grade of WA [Administrative Withdrawal];
10	Southwest Baptist University, Los Angeles (USA)	Laconic : to attend all class sessions;	-Attendance used as a part of the student's grade for the course; -Each syllabus shall contain an explanation of the rationale of the attendance component of the grade and the consequences of an absence;
11	International University of Geneva (Switzerland)	Laconic: "Students of IUG are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions";	-
12	Purdue University (USA)	Laconic: "Instructors are expected to establish and clearly communicate in the course syllabus attendance policies relevant to individual courses (i.e. no institutional policy)	-
13	Université de Paris-Sorbonne (France)	-Laconic: "Attendance to courses is required";	List of attendance to be circulated at every session;
14	University of Cape Town (South Africa)	-Laconic: "A student must attend"; -Rather detailed provisions on leave of absence;	-
15	City University of London (England)	Regular and punctual attendance at lectures, seminars, tutorial and practicals;	Persistent absence without good cause: interview with the HoD or decision of dropout of the course and withdrawal by the Registry;
16	University of East London (England)	Presence at all classes, lectures, seminars or other academic elements that are a compulsory part of the program;	-De-registration from a module for 3 compulsory elements missed; -Withdrawal from the program for non European Economic Area students on Tier 4 student visas;
17	Boston College (USA)	"Regular attendance" but not quantified;	-Absentee to be evaluated by faculty responsible for the course to ascertain his/her ability to achieve the course objectives and to continue in the course; -Professors may include, as part of the semester's grades, marks for the quality and quantity of the student's participation in class;
18	City University of New York (USA)	Laconic: "Students are expected to attend all classes or participate in distance learning experiences as	-

		required";	
19	Yale University (USA)	-No provision on attendance; -yet, very detailed provisions on "leave of absence";	-
20	University of Ottawa (Canada)	Very laconic provision: "Students must attend class".	-
21	University of Sydney (Australia)	-Minimum: 90% (or 80% in some sources) of lectures, tutorial or workshops; -Attendance requirements differ according to the award course and unit of study.	-Less than 50% of lectures and/or less than 50% of tutorials or workshops: fail outright; -Employment or timetable clashes: not valid excuses.

The table above indicates so many similarities but also so many differences between institutions worldwide with regard to regulations related to the management of the attendance issue, but an overview can be drawn by groupings as shown by the following table.

Table n°4: Regulations-based grouping of institutions

Group	Characteristics	Institution (full name: see table above)
1	Total lack of provisions on attendance issues.	Jomo Kenyatta, Nairobi/School of Commerce, Yale
2	Very laconic statement.	Ottawa, Geneva, New York, Dar es Salaam, Cape Town, Boston, Paris-Sorbonne, Purdue, Southwest Baptist,
3	Detailed provisions and implementation mechanisms.	KIE, ULK, NUR, Sydney, East Carolina, Marquette, London, East London, IIM/Cnam
4	Detailed provisions without implementation mechanisms.	Makerere

For more visibility, this table shows in a condensed way the main trends in terms of provisions with regard to the main variable, i.e. student attendance, in so many institutions, with different historical backgrounds, from both francophone and Anglophone systems.

### Discussions of findings

The first observation is that practices are so different and the concept of 'attendance' is understood in different ways from one extreme to another, i.e. from a system with a total lack of provisions to a system with very rigorous provisions with even possibility of de-registration, withdrawal or dropout, passing by a system where the attendance component is part of the grade for the course or the semester, which may lead to an outright failure of the course or the semester (then repeat), because not only the quantity but also the quality of the participation in class are given a specific mark. Note also that, in some institutions, attendance requirements differ according to the award course and unit of study.

The second one is that the standard configuration, the planning, the implementation and the supervision practices or mechanisms differ from institution to institution. Indeed the follow-up is done in diverse ways. Some institutions specify that an attendance list must be circulated at every session while others are totally silent on the

issue. In others, things are taken so seriously to the extent that the student has the responsibility to notify the instructor immediately about class absence, to provide appropriate documentation for an absence and discuss any missed class time. Note even that, at Makerere University, on returning from vacation or leave of absence, every student shall report to both his/her College Registrar and the Warden of the Hall of Residence where either one resides or is attached without delay!

The third one is that, in some institutions, the whole issue is left to the discretion of the instructor who is abandoned to himself and cannot be, ipso facto, accountable for actions taken in a system where no control mechanisms are set.

According to Butler University's "Student Disability Services", the following questions need to be considered when determining the extent to which attendance is an essential requirement of a course and whether an exception to the attendance policy may be appropriate:

- Is there classroom interaction between the instructor and students and among the students themselves?
- Do student's contributions in class constitute a significant component of the learning process?
- Does the fundamental nature of the course rely on student participation as an essential method of learning?
- To what degree does a student's failure to attend class constitute a significant loss to the educational experience of other students in the class?
- What does the course description and syllabus say regarding attendance?
- By what method is the final grade calculated?

The question now is the demarcation line between the leniency or laxity which is observed on one hand and the rigorousness on the other hand. In such a situation, many scenarios can be envisaged. The simplest could be to throw the baby out with the bathwater as it happened at Lausanne University which changed the academic regulations and enacted a new article which stipulates that the control of student attendance, for instance by using an 'attendance list' is not a validation mode and in principle, it is not authorized (Daele, 2011). As it could be expected, such news sounded the death knell for the whole system and disoriented lecturers. Among them, there was Daele who decided not to throw in the towel. Instead, she started looking for solutions by confronting diverse experiences after having read "Student absenteeism: Whose responsibility?" (Barlow & Fleischer, 2011). Her work gives very interesting comments and new insights from Swiss experiences. Barlow and Fleischer start by asking questions: should we make courses obligatory? Should we allow students to follow courses by using prerecorded mode with videos? Should we propose them complementary works or assignments when they have been absent? First of all, they admit that the presence in class does not guarantee that students will learn effectively. Nevertheless, Daele notes that, in her literature review, there is a positive link between attendance and success. Besides that, students' non attendance can provoke discontent both for the lecturer and for students, which might lead to class dynamics less favorable to learning. Lastly, provision of prerecorded materials like videos could give absentees a false feeling of security. This idea refers to the use of podcasts (see below) since researches have never demonstrated any

difference in terms of success between students who attend and those who just use those gadgets. This put her in some confusion and led her to question the rightfulness of class sessions if it is possible to achieve the same level of learning without attending. She found the solution to the interrogation in what the two researchers called "negotiated engagement", which suggests that the presence and the involvement of students in class is not (or no longer) a behavior which goes without saying. Indeed, results of their survey showed that:

- In certain disciplines (medicine and professionalizing pathways), class attendance was compulsory but attendance control was almost impossible with big groups. In that case, they propose to reduce as much as possible the students' feeling of anonymity. This requires to give students the opportunity of giving their views and expectations at the beginning of the year and to insist on the importance of attendance vis-à-vis success;
- Pedagogically, it should also be possible to make difficult to pass exams without attending class, for instance by focusing on evaluation questions taken from exercises done in class, discussions done between students or presentations done by invited experts, group works (which implies students' responsibility vis-à-vis their classmates for collective success), etc.;
- Higher learning and teaching should not be too interventionist because students need to learn the sense of autonomy and responsibility; which is a big challenge since they must learn how to manage not only their studies but also their daily life, knowing that some of them have work responsibilities in parallel and currently this must be taken into account by universities;
- For some lecturers, attendance is only one part of the teaching and learning process and they would wish to give individual assignments to be done outside class or interaction forms, through online learning plat-form.

Coming back to the question of "whose responsibility", Daele is supportive to the position of the two authors who refer to some institutional policies which can be too laxist or too rigid (e.g. IIM, Sydney and Makerere). For her, smooth rules, adaptable to types of courses and contexts could constitute a general framework for student class attendance and the aforementioned example of Lausanne University is not bad, even if it needs to be a bit explicit, especially when we talk of new comers. Note that the two authors also take as responsible some teaching practices, specifically those which propose badly thought-out uses of new technologies which do not necessarily bring a surplus value or an added-value.

Last but not least, students and families also have their responsibility, therefore, they must anticipate on the difficulties related to learning independence and the entry in adult life. Indeed, in her conclusion, Daele points out the fact that everybody has his/her responsibility. She even targets pedagogical advisors even if Barlow and Fleischer do not talk about them. Specifically, she feels it is time to sensitize lecturers who must question themselves on surplus value of their courses and their complementarity with online resources and activities, reflect on evaluation strategies which take into account activities realized in class, develop practices which help students learn autonomy, especially in first years, work regularly their responsibility, read more efficiently, in order to collaborate with their classmates, etc.

In these two complementary works, the issue of modern technologies came out very often. Actually, it is today a highly topical issue in higher education sector since the number of universities which embark on that mode of teaching delivery is increasing. For example, after having realized that absenteeism has become an endemic problem in universities and that students can validate fraudulently classmates' presence in class, Aoyama Gakuin University (Tokyo, Japan) has currently decided to offer all its students an iPhone in order to fight against absenteeism. The system is designed such that the student responds "yes" through his/her iPhone when he/she is called and his presence in class can be confirmed by the GPS localization function. Actually, the university intends to extend that facility to exchanges between lecturers, reception of courses with podcast or attendance in some exams.

In the USA, the University of Columbia also has obliged all journalism students to possess either an iPhone or an iPod for the teaching-learning sessions. In reality, it is an obligation only by name because those gadgets will be included in the usual federal aids allocated to students. In the same register, its sister University of Berkeley has decided to use YouTube as a teaching delivery mode for so many disciplines like chemistry, physics, or biology. Parallely, it will be used for interventions of external resource persons, life of campuses and sport competitions. The last example is Princeton University which envisages using videos for selected courses and interventions, but only on its site.

Nevertheless, testimonies from French students enrolled at CNAM ("Conservatoire national des arts et métiers", Paris) reveal a certain skepticism about that trend. In fact, their enthusiasm vis-à-vis what Mellow (2005) calls the "mobile net generation" and the "mobile delivery" (or "mLearning") is tempered by the additional time and the difficulties to grasp implied. Note that, after triangulation of the collected data, Shannon (2006) arrives at almost the same conclusion in her survey on first year students using MP3 uploads and a classroom set of iPod nanos: students of Adelaide University believe it is important to attend lectures (87.5%) and even more important (92.5%) to get the information from lectures (whether they attend them or not).

Our fourth and last research question was whether there is matching between KIE's GAR with the current trends on teaching, attendance and student achievement issues. The study reveals that there is none.

## Conclusion

As a result, the study shows that KIE should learn from two types of facts shown above: the one where 100% of those who failed were precisely those who did not attend classes, but also the one where entire big groups which did not attend regularly or not at all have passed with very high scores. But it should also learn from other experiences in the way other institutions manage the attendance and achievement issues. Therefore, as an institution, it should revisit its GAR, specifically with regard to the provisions and the implementation and control mechanisms in order to find its happy medium between leniency and excessive rigorousness, between an interventionist and policing system and a system which favors a culture of autonomy, independence and sense of responsibility through a "negotiated engagement" (Barlow and Fleischer, 2011), between a second-rate teaching and a quality teaching giving more weight to activities realized in class, between the traditional teaching model and the aforementioned modern teaching

aids. In other terms, it should update and/or soften its GAR and take into account the transformations of the society, in particular the socio-economic parameters (Jones, 2006) derived from the recent changes related to the students' loan system since a couple of years. Note that while some receive the government living allowance, others strive against misfortune by doing casual works as part-time teachers for the most lucky, or as porters, day/night watchmen, cleaners, etc. for the unlucky. Don't we say that there is no reasoning with a starving man? The prevailing mood of classes scheduled in the afternoons speaks for itself. From that point of view, it is clear that the future of KIE teaching system with regard to the investigated variables (attendance) will largely depend on the answers provided to those questions which are worthwhile to be explored.

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