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South African students and Simply Managing Academic Related Tasks

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Simply Managing Academic Related Tasks

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ABSTRACT

Individuals are born are born “Tabula Rosa” blank slates. We begin the learning process from the moment we are born; every learning process has a reward, this is one of the ways in which we learn from birth. The process of learning is an evolutionary one, it evolves over the course of our individual lives, based on a series of experiences that we will have in our unique lifetime. As we pass through a series of different stages in our lives; learning begins to have new meanings and is translated into a particular and new reality. This reality is different for each individual. Our experiences of the learning process contribute to the social constructs of our lives and determine our individual futures. Learning determines progress, qualifications, income and social status in society. This paper seeks to explore how students learn, the challenges that they face in the learning process and how these can be corrected to produce better learning environments, results and experiences.

KEY WORDS

Socially constructed realities, learning processes, methods, academic, tasks, managing, neuro-pathways

INTRODUCTION

Education is the cornerstone for economic, political and social advancement in today's capitalist world. It has been used as a tool of oppression in the once apartheid state, while at the same time education has helped provide the necessary tools to propel oppressed people out of an apartheid state into a free and democratic society. This paper begins to look at some of the key issues that we face both as educators and as students in a post apartheid South Africa. From the harrowed halls of Michael house in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands to the outskirts of Jambili a school in the North of Kwa Zulu Natal the differences are stark. This paper is part of a sociological investigation into the state of education and learning in South Africa. It begins to address important sociological questions that have been ignored for far too long. In beginning to understand education and the inequalities that are coupled with it there are a series of socio, political and economic factors that need to be understood. If we are to find answers we need to start with the students themselves. Let us take the following scenario; if all fifty school students and one thousand university students attend the same classes; have the same take home assignments; assessments and are taught by the same teacher; watch the same visual material, listen to the same audio instruction and have exactly the same learning experience, they should all receive the same grades. ***Does this sound correct?*** In reality if we were all exactly the same type of human beings with exactly the same social experiences this should be one hundred percent correct.

Let us not negate the critical issues of class, race, gender, and access to educational institutions and resources when addressing learning. The reality of these unique factors that affect

education and learning in South Africa is very complex and translates negatively in society at large. Each and every one of us has our own reality, most of which I argue is socially constructed based on a series of social experiences. This reality has been created as a result of our individual life experiences which are differentiated based on race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and a multitude of other factors. The fractures in a South African post apartheid society are a particular cause for concern. My particular cause for concern is with the unique factors that influence the reality of individual learning processes and the student's individual and unique ability to learn at both school and university levels. This learning process is later transferred into the workplace for the individual either positively or negatively. To initiate this discussion there are four areas in which I will look at when addressing the learning process. These include learning that occurs in the home environment; the school; university; and the workplace, however as the research develops these areas may be further expanded. These will form part of the broader areas that impact on and shape learning.

We need to consider the following "...Every child's problem-is part of a much larger system of home, school, community and culture" (Healy, 2010:5) these areas are part of the individuals' lifelong learning experiences. In exploring the four key areas that students experience learning we need to establish at the very outset what the literature in the field of education offers. "Ask any teacher and he or she will tell you that schools highly value the visual learning traits and visual learners are the ones consistently getting the best grades." (Wayman, 2003: 14) There are four different types of learners; The Visual learner; The Auditory learner; The Read/ Write

Learner and the Kinesthetic Learner. It is only once these types of learners are understood, explored and explained that we as educators can begin to improve the delivery to our students at individual levels. Within a South African society the gap between the rich and the poor is so vast that these very gaps separate us at the outset into those that will succeed and those that will be left behind in a supposedly evolving and changing democratic society. Both as academics and educators it becomes our responsibility to address these challenges head on within the classroom and place all students at the starting line together. The cleavages of race, class, gender and access will not disappear from the horizon in South Africa or any other part of the world, so it falls upon members of educational institutions, educators, and teachers to drive the process of change at strategic levels.

SO WHERE DOES LEARNING BEGIN?

Learning is an important lifelong process that begins from the moment we are born, if not before and continues until our death. Healy (2010) and Wayman (2003) both experts in the field of learning address the process from an interdisciplinary perspective; it is the interdisciplinary nature of their research that offers value to educators in the South African context. They concur in their findings and report that if learning challenges are not addressed at a school level this can and will result in broader social problems into adulthood for the individuals and society at large. These social problems include but are not limited to crime, deviance, violence and a series of other social ills that riddles contemporary society as we know

it. As sociologists we have to be in a position to address the causal factors of a disintegrating society.

Learning is a process that can only be met with success if the student that is being taught feels that he or she has the potential to achieve the desired results and outcomes. If the student “defines the situation as real it becomes real in its consequences” (Thomas, 1923: 13). A different social reality within a socially and historically racially stratified South African society lends itself to a multitude of challenges for learners and educators. Merton’s (1968: 699) self-fulfilling prophecy is a “phenomenon that occurs when a false definition of the situation evokes a new behavior which makes the original false conception come true.” Evidence can be found of these definitions among students within schools and Universities within a South African context. So begins the inquiry into the poor performance of students at schools and universities within the South African context. Consciously and sub-consciously we tip people off, to what our expectations of them are. As teachers this sends a powerful message to students at all levels particularly within a racially fractured society.

THE SCHOOL / UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT

The school environment remains one of South Africa’s greatest challenges; it has to be a place that is conducive to the learning process. If the basic requirements are not met, the student cannot be expected to receive and process information appropriately and effectively. South Africa is home to some of the world’s most highly rated private schools, yet at the same time some of our schools face new challenges on a daily basis as a result of poor resources,

inadequate teaching staff and poor teaching facilities. The imbalance between the two is one of the first areas that require vigorous exploration and intense scrutiny. Areas that will be the focus of investigation include the following; Access to basic nutrition; Access to skilled teachers and educators; Access to resources and recent research; Access to private or public schools; Access to support treatments (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, auditory processing, reading, math....) for public school students; Language; transition to University; what happens at university?

THE TYPES OF LEARNERS

Each learner is different; however scholars in the field of education and cognitive development make a case for the accommodation largely of visual learners within the schooling environment both locally and globally. Students that do not necessarily favor this learning style begin to be challenged at the very outset of their schooling career. While some schools have systems in place to offer bridging classes and basic study skills without necessarily fixing the problem, other schools do not have appropriately qualified staff to offer services for children who are learning challenged. As a critical point of departure, understanding and knowing the type of learner that every student is, should be as essential as the alphabet is in reading. There are very few of us that know precisely the type of learner that we are and the strengths and weaknesses of that particular learning style, and it's appropriateness for studying specific subjects or materials. Teachers are faced with a barrage of students and the numbers of students are on the increase. While the numbers are increasing the resources continue to decrease and as such

the victims are the students. The students initially thought to be the direct recipients and beneficiaries of the learning process. This becomes the breeding ground for learning problems beginning at the entry level of the schooling career for children who are often no more than four to five years of age. We begin to witness a co morbid of challenges that students begin to face and collect as they pass through school and for those that are fortunate arrive at university, some of whom will never have the opportunity to complete their degree because of these very factors. ***It is essential at this point that we consider a learning style assessment at the beginning of each year. This way teachers and specialists can begin to plan, integrate and use effective techniques for learners that help them achieve academically.***

THE BRAIN

David Rock (2009) offers a detailed and comprehensive explanation on the brain and what it requires to operate at optimal levels. His important research in the field of neuroscience has helped social scientists utilize and combine scientific explanations with sociological explanations to understand the learning process among students at both schools and universities. Rock (2009) believes that the brain must be in an optimal mindset in order for us to learn effectively. One of the key challenges is shifting the brain to operate at an optimal level. This is interrupted by our students concerns with, basic access to food, transport, accommodation and a series of basic needs that are required to optimize the learning process. When we introduce culture, language and resources into the equation of learning; historically marginalized individuals from all backgrounds become compromised in the learning process.

When students that have historically been taught in one language (English, Afrikaans, Zulu...) move into institutions of higher learning and are taught in a different language, they are placed in a difficult learning environment. When these difficulties are ignored by teachers and the institutions of higher learning at large students become the victims in large numbers. If we are to effect change at any level at both schools and university we need to open ourselves to innovation and change in an aggressive way. Apartheid was aggressive in its policies and laws on education; so too must the solution and policies be aggressive in rectifying the wrong. It is these very strategies that form the bases for the following strategies. Information, knowledge and lessons are what learners are expected to process every day at schools and universities. This is information that they will be tested on for exams and tests; it will determine their individual lot in life.

Let me reinforce what scholars in the field of education and cognitive development indicate; ***schools cater to the visual learners***. If you are a visual learner you are one of the brightest at school and university, if you are not, you face a series of challenges on the continuum of development. In order to address these challenges we need to understand the shifts that need to be made. One of the major challenges that learners face in the learning process is what Rock (2009) refers to as a ***blockage*** in the brain. This blockage can be the result of the learner being pre-occupied with far too many issues. It is only when these blockages are cleared are we able to begin to learn. The multitude of factors that can create blockages for learners are deeply rooted in class, gender and race within the South African context. ***Pretty*¹ (female post graduate***

¹ Not the student's real name

student) "I am not sure of my results from last semester. I know I did not do well. I had many family problems and financial problems." She was preoccupied with issues that did not allow her the freedom to focus on her studies. This however is not the only complex issue, there are students that are preoccupied with living arrangement, food, and school fees. To produce a group of graduates that will be effective contributors to our society we need to address their key concerns if they are to complete their degrees successfully. Basic services must become available to students so that their needs can be met. In order for learning to occur effectively we need to make sure that our brain moves into a **toward state**. This is a brain state that is receptive to learning new information. In order for this to occur we need to ensure that students are interested in what they are learning. This is very easy for educators with a small amount of effort and initiative; educators need to create a sense of curiosity for their learners. When we have achieved interest and curiosity the brain releases a chemical known as **dopamine**. Once this is achieved the learner will begin to pay close attention to the content and open up to the learning process. When the learner is curious the brain moves into this toward state and learning becomes an easy and enjoyable process.

The other extreme would be an **away state**, this is when **norepinephrine** is released into the brain, this is the adrenaline of the brain, and it creates feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. This is a recipe for a disastrous learning process. What occurs for most learners is an **away state**.

As human beings we all have the ability to take control of our brains. What we need to do is understand our brain in order to strengthen the performance. We already know that we have the ability to both increase and decrease our intelligence. Simply managing academic related tasks requires simple management of your brain. The brain is made up of millions of maps, neurons and cells. The aim of SMART is to explain the most important parts of the brain to help you function at your best in an academic environment. If I asked you the following questions could you answer them? Recite the alphabet? Recite the months of the year? Recite the days of the week? The answer is probably yes. The reason that this can be done so easily is because you have a functional brain. The part of your brain responsible for you being able to answer the above questions is your **BASAL GANGLIA**. Your Basal Ganglia is a part of your brain that is responsible for routine activities such as walking, talking, eating or using mobile phone. Think about these things, you can do them without any thought at all. So when we do things without any thought we often call them habits. Something that is part of you, something you do without thinking. Habits can be good and bad they include, biting your nails, reading before bed, eating a specific meal at a specific time on a specific day. Habits can be both good and bad it is easier to adopt a bad habit than it is to adopt a good habit. A good habit is often harder to adopt than a bad habit. Once we do something often enough through repetition and practice it becomes embedded or carved into our brain. The brain creates a roadmap or develops neuropathways that automatically get us to our destination. So for lack of a better analogy our brains are like a satellite navigation system. If we type in the coordinates and lock them in we can access directions when we need them. So remember we need to make sure that we embed important information into our brain to help create new maps. The more maps we create the less energy

we will use. This will result in minimizing effort and maximizing academic results. We will focus on creating new maps in our brain in order to improve the learning process.

There are a series of techniques that can be effectively followed in order to retrain our brains and the way in which we process information. The most important part of retraining or rewiring the brain is to try new ways of learning and thinking. When we find new ways of learning and thinking we need to ensure that we *REPEAT REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT, and REPEAT*. Repetition creates new maps in our brains. Repetition helps to embed information into the basal ganglia of the brain. Visualising can also help the learner with effective results and outcomes. Create pictures in your brain to help you remember if language is a debilitating factor. Vision can be developed to improve learning (Wayman; 2003)

SELF AWARENESS is important; you need to be aware of why you make decisions; why do you particular opinions. Do you have opinions because you have been told to have these opinions, have you thought about your opinion. Do you have enough knowledge before you make a decision or form an opinion?

Savant (2009) believes that **LOGIC** is an essential tool for effective thinking. She begins to challenge learners as by asking; do you logically think things through before making a decision? Do you right them down, collect information, and weigh up available options? If your answer is no you need to begin to reevaluate what you accept as the truth. Logic does not involve emotion, when we make choices or decisions using logic it is often met with positive outcomes

that help achieve academic results. Let us see your brain as a computer, what you put in to it is what you will get out of it, which sounds fair. Human beings like fairness, when we feel that people are fair to us our brain releases a chemical called **serotonin**. Serotonin helps you feel safe and puts you at ease. When serotonin is released into the brain we feel positive. If we can maintain serotonin levels at an optimal level in our brain we can perform at our very best. We move toward instructions offered by teachers, professors, family and most other people. This results in a release of dopamine into the brain. **Dopamine** levels need to be high to ensure that we remain interested in the process of learning. When dopamine levels are high we learn well, we are interested, curiosity drives us to discover more information. This in turn releases oxytocin into the brain. **Oxytocin** is a powerful chemical in the brain it is released when a child first makes contact with his/her mother. It is released when we see our children achieve. Oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin are important chemicals that we need in order to perform at our peak as students. When we cannot achieve the balance we tend to run away from the process of learning. We feel that teachers and parents are being unfair toward us. We feel that our friends always do better than we do no matter how hard we try and this threatens our status among our friends, family and teachers. This does not make us feel very good. We do not have the correct chemical balance in our brain so we run away and this can a very difficult place to be in. The best way to become a better student, learner or teacher is to understand that the learning process is infinite it never ends. Keep it simple; introduce one new concept at a time to re train your brain.

BUILDING YOUR INTELLIGENCE

Introducing the **Socratic Method** into your learning process; this means that you should question and enquire about things that you are interested in. This is an effective way of learning and creating a **toward state** which is essential for the learning process. Build your **vocabulary**; learn one new word every day, make sure that you use the word. Look at the origins of words, or phrases, this is often interesting and can help create a toward state for the learning process. What is the origin of the phrase 'the bee's knees', and what exactly does it mean? The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the expression *bee's knee* as meaning the type of something small or insignificant from 1797. The plural form is US slang dating from the 1920s, when there was an explosion of terms meaning 'the acme of excellence': compare *the cat's whiskers/pyjamas*. The first example is dated 1923. Some of these have lasted, and some have not (*the flea's eyebrows, the canary's tusks*). www.askoxford.com. What is the origin of the word 'news'? The original sense of news was 'new things'; this is long obsolete. Since the 15th century it has been used to mean 'tidings, the report of recent events, new occurrences as a subject or report or talk.' The adjective new goes back to Old English. www.askoxford.com

This exercise should help you to develop and broaden your vocabulary; this is a valuable asset that will be useful throughout your life. You will also begin to see the world through the eyes of other people and cultures as you begin to build knowledge. Remember at present we only use a small fraction of our brains, this means that the possibilities are endless. Each new word stretches your mind and builds your knowledge in new ways. Tabula Rosa is a blank slate.

Imagine that your brain is a blank slate and you can fill it with new and exciting information through repetition, interest and excitement. Human beings are different from animals for hundreds of reasons. The most important reason is that we have the ability to question why.

When attending classes over the next few weeks' research indicates that students should consider the following. What do you do when you do not understand a concept an idea a theory? Do you go back to basics, collect basic information on the topic, and ask questions have a discussion challenge yourself. Do you understand what your teacher is conveying to you? Are you giving your full attention to the task at hand? Are you going back to basics if you do not understand something? Are you using logic to make sense of your work? Math is based on logic and certainty. Human beings like certainty because it makes us feel safe and creates a toward reaction. Why do most people freeze when it comes to math? Let's think about this, is it because everyone around us tells us that math is hard. Now let's rethink this do you have your own interpretation of math. Do you think you can look at math differently? You can if you create a new map in your brain. This can be done by walking into a local school supply store and purchasing workbooks that start from basic understanding to advance math. Savant (2009) Have you been able to create a practical link to the knowledge that you are receiving? Are you embedding information into your brain through repetition? Are you looking at things from your teachers or parents perspective? Are you creating the correct chemical balance in your brain to move to a toward state that guarantees positive results? Can you make distinctions between concepts such as "that was a really crazy thing to do" or "that person is crazy"? Do you ever stop to question the reasons why we do things? Do you know why it is important to get a good

night's rest, well if we rest for a minimum of six hours each night; we have improved recall and memory. Healy (2010) A large number of activities that we engage in have a logical explanation. However, we need to understand and question everything in order to build our own intelligence. If we accept everything without questioning it, we would not be able to improve our knowledge. Can you imagine your life without a mobile phone, transportation or any modern day convenience? Knowledge is an important catalyst for change and change is an inevitable part of progress and discovery. Change can only occur with the creation of new knowledge and the catalyst for this is the ability to learn and process information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overcome your fear of the unknown, you do not know everything and I will never know everything, because new knowledge is being created as we speak. However it is important that we become confident with the knowledge that we possess in order to build upon it. Think of knowledge as a house, it needs to be built one brick at a time. Each home will be different, with unique styles and themes. So are the building blocks for knowledge building and creation. In order to be a confident learner and build an accurate knowledge base it is important to invest in the necessary tools these should include but are not limited to; a dictionary, a thesaurus, a recent set of encyclopedias, an updated world atlas and any other collection of knowledge based on specific areas of knowledge acquisition. Try to use all these reference sources daily to build knowledge. Make sure that they are easily accessible. They should not be packed away on a shelf or in a cupboard. These books should lie flat on a table. A well developed vocabulary

and general knowledge is an outward sign of a well developed mind. As adults you will hear words that you do not understand. As a young student look up words that you have heard a few times and always wondered what they mean. Now that you know the meanings of these words you will understand them in relation to the conversation. You should also begin to use these words so they become familiar. Remember that repetition is important for embedding information. People that try to impress others arises from a lack of confidence; this often makes people seem less intelligent. Learn to pronounce words correctly. Refrain from using slang, talk in full sentences. Communication is an important tool in the learning process. Make sure that you read every day. Begin with easy material and move on to more challenging and interesting material. Face your academic challenges head on beginning with one item at a time. Learning must be an enjoyable process. When writing a test, exam, letter or an email be selective about your choice of words. The words you chose are used by people to judge you. When you begin to read new books begin with the end in mind. Read the end first and then go back to the beginning, this can sharpen the mind. You will begin to look for clues and see things that you might have missed if you did not know the outcome of the book. Savant (2009) chooses a challenging book; make a point of reading it every day until you have completed the book. Spend only five minutes every day reading the book, keep reading small amounts everyday as you get through the book you will begin to make sense of it. Try integrating logic into subjects that you have difficulty understanding, look at your challenges with a fresh perspective.

John Dewey outlined a logical framework for addressing a problem; he recommends that we become aware of the problem. Define the problem. Analyze the problem. Approach the

problem rationally from different perspectives. Consider all the options. Select a solution and verify the solution. Always use logic, logic provides support for an argument. Logic is not directed by emotion. Deductive Logic; a priori, from what comes before. Knowledge that we already have. Facts that we take for granted based on prior knowledge. A priori reasoning known as deductive reasoning is based on assumptions. These assumptions have been accepted as true. Inductive Logic: a posteriori, from what comes after. We accumulate data or research. We observe the data. We then draw general conclusions. Carnegie (2006)

PROCESSING INFORMATION

Scanning information refers to is scanning material, before you dive in to study the material, consider scanning it. Once you have studied the material scan it again. At this point key words should jump out at you. They jump out at you because they have become familiar to you. So what happens when you are sitting for that final exam and you cannot access the maps in your brain to find the appropriate information? You can scan your brain if you do not have the information in front of you, work with information that you do have. Scan the **alphabets** in your mind's eye, when a familiar alphabet stands out throw out all the words associated with your search. Do not panic if this takes a little while, clear your mind and listen to the signals from your brain go to the toward state. Use a sheet of paper and follow your thought logically by **drawing**. The information will become accessible. **Challenge** yourself every day with new information. When you feel that you cannot face a challenge lets go back in history and learn from one of the greatest minds. Socrates saw a problem as piece of stone, which every piece

that he chipped away he saw a shape beginning to form. This is how he approached a problem.

Intuition is an essential tool for building knowledge. It is a natural skill that all human beings possess, however many have lost the ability to use it. Intuition is when we become aware of signals from both people and the environment which are not necessarily obvious to others.

Intuition is what makes you stay home after looking out at the clouds only to witness dangerous weather conditions. Intuition is what makes us pay attention to common sense and sensitivity.

CREATE THE CORRECT ENVIRONMENT

Ensure that you have eliminated all distractions in your study area. Continue to study at the same time every day. If this is not possible you can be flexible about time depending on your schedule. The aim is to create a routine, environment and association. A time, place and activity associated together create a suitable environment conducive to the studying process. Remain consistent, respect your attention span, switch modes, remember how to process information for effective retention.

THE TECHNIQUES

In order to effectively make changes to your study approach, **study management techniques** have to be carefully followed and adhered to. You have had the opportunity to grapple with a variety of techniques. Each time you use them you become a little more familiar with them.

Some of the techniques should be self evident for you. You can identify the evidence if you are becoming a more successful student. Are you producing better results? To optimize change in your study management techniques and your results you need to follow the SMART principles. Remember the principle remains the same they do not ever change. Successes that endure or last are embodied principles that govern our lives and carry us through. We have already created a system that **prioritizes** learning in an enjoyable and manageable way. We also know how to deal with academic challenges that you may face, by moving toward it. It is easy to move to an away state or focus on the problem. The problem offers certainty the solution offers the unknown. Remember human beings love certainty they hate the unknown. Now that you understand this you will be able to see **opportunities in problems**. When we create problems or look for them we take our brain and our thinking into an away state, we bring problems into existence. Stepping out of the situation and using **logic** helps to solve problems. These principles can be applied to studying, business, community, friends and family. These are universal principles of success. Confidence will begin to grow as you address academic challenges for all your subjects now and in the future. Your positive attitude will release **creative energy** and the **creative mind** set solves problems better. So when you receive a bad grade you need to look at the solution to improving your grade. You should not focus on the **problem**. The problem is a bad grade. A bad grade is certain you can see it in front of you. It is easy to focus on this. However you should focus on the solution. The solution will be to achieve a higher grade. The steps that need to be put in place to achieve the higher grade include the following; A study routine; A study technique; Setting time aside to work; Take responsibility.

This forces the student to improve and **challenge** every day. This will produce self evident results. This will also build confidence and certainty for you as a student in managing your academic tasks. This leads to an increased belief in yourself in your own intellectual ability. Developing an understanding of the concept that every action has a reaction or result becomes real in the way that you approach your academic tasks. **STUDYING + ROUTINE+HARD WORK+ RESPONSIBILITY+CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT= OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC RESULTS=SUCCESS**

INTRODUCTION OF GOAL CARDS IN THE PROCESS

Write down your goals on a **goal** card. Assess them periodically. Have they changed? What is your long term goal? What is your short term goal? All of the steps help you firmly carve your goal into your brain into the basal ganglia. You have begun your journey to the ultimate goal. What is this goal? It can be anything you create a map for in your mind. These techniques and help you imagine and plan to meeting your goal, they help you see your goal and ultimately realize your goal. Writing it down on your goal cards also makes it very real. You can see it on paper; this helps you actualize the goal or internalize it. Do not look for **problems** specifically; set to work on reaching your goals. Measure everything that you do against the end result that you are trying to achieve, this forces you to work harder. These steps are part of a self fulfilling prophecy that you have set out for yourself.

REFRESHING YOUR BODY AND BRAIN

Remember to take care of yourself. Your brain has to be nurtured and fed in order for it to work and function at optimal levels. Make sure you have enough rest; research indicates that students that sleep 6-10 hours a night have better memories. A good night sleep will ensure that you remember your study material from the night before. To keep your interest alive, try new methods of studying. Your methods will change and improve as you become more confident. If you find that a study method is not working for you switch. Be willing to innovate.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

The key to being a successful student is the need for **renewal and continual improvement**. If you keep your interest alive in the learning process you will begin to approach learning with a new and simple energy. Once these steps have been firmly put in place they become habitual. As a learner who acquires new and valuable knowledge you can now identify logic in the process of learning. You begin to witness both personal and academic growth. Now that you have a clear idea of how to study and why we study this should ideally renew your understanding of why studying is so important. Every time you meet your own challenges in an academic environment, reinforcing basic **SMART principles** will ensure positive outcomes. These are among the universal principles of learning and acquiring knowledge, they will slowly become self evident as they are integrated into your academic and later professional life. These principles if followed carefully and diligently guarantee successful outcomes over and over again.

There are a series of rules that are universal to secure success. These rules have been followed by individuals of all races, genders and nationalities they know no boundaries. They are the undisputed rules of success. When these rules are carefully, deliberately and strategically pursued, they are guaranteed to be met with success. We have seen an increase in the number of successful people that have written books based on the rules of their success.

ORGANIZATION IS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL TOOLS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS

You can easily establish your unique method that suits you best. Find similar methods that suit your interests and learning style by experimenting and combining tried and tested methods. Remember to stay organized at all times. Organization is one of the key ingredients of academic success. Organize your study material well in advance. Reinforce your study habits daily until they become habitual. Take care and maintain your study area and replenish and use your study tools when needed.

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Managing your time as a student can be extremely challenging. As we get older workloads and responsibilities increase in the academic environment. Every year teachers and professors expect more of us than they did the year before. In order to meet these expectations we have to learn how to manage our time. Our time has to be managed effectively if we are to execute all tasks assigned to us. Ensure that you have a year planner, pocket diary and a desk calendar.

At the beginning of each year fill these diaries in. They should include all important dates. (Birthdays, holidays, public holidays, special religious holidays, exam dates, test dates). Every time you receive a new deadline at school/university insert this into your pocket diary. Do not forget to update your desk calendar and wall calendar when you get home. Remember your SMART study timetable and plan, update these regularly.

CONCLUSION

To believe that we are products of our social environments, everyone and every institution that we come into contact with impacts on us, who we are, how we think and how we approach schooling and learning. Our mind creates our world and our realities. We create what we believe is true about our performance and what we can and cannot achieve. However we can influence our minds and goals, the results that we achieve and our performance in any academic and work environment. In attempting to improve academic performance we need a **purpose** for doing so. You need to ask yourself the following; Why do you want to do well? What is the reason? What will change? How will you do this? Well it is very easy really you will do this through creating a **map**. This map will have direction. These directions will need to be carefully followed if you want to reach your final destination. An example of this could be :I will read one newspaper article every day. Reason..... I will learn one symbol on the periodic table every day. Reason.....I.....will.....Reason.....Now that you have a clear idea of how to study and why we study this should ideally renew your understanding of why studying is

so important. Every time you meet your own challenges in an academic environment, reinforcing basic **SMART principles** will ensure positive outcomes. These are among the universal principles of learning and acquiring knowledge, they will slowly become self evident as they are integrated into your academic and later professional life. These principles if followed carefully and diligently guarantee successful outcomes over and over again.

SO WHAT IS SMART

Simply Managing Academic Related Tasks is a study management and results driven programme that has been designed for students at all levels in order to affect and improve their learning process. The programme establishes the following through a series of qualitative questions.

- I. The learning style.
- II. The attention span.
- III. Confidence.
- IV. Process information.

The following are a series of rules that have been selected for the SMART programme based on extensive review of literature. The books that were reviewed have been written by world recognized specialists in education, brain function, medicine, attention, intelligence quotients, politics, business, sociology, psychology, neuroscience, cognitive development and leadership.

The rules have empirical proof that demonstrates its effectiveness in achieving academic and professional success at all levels. When integrating SMART tasks, we will begin integrating them one at a time. We want to ensure that these steps become part of who we are and how we engage with our academic material in order to learn effectively. You need to remind yourself to integrate these steps every time, until it becomes a habitual. A habit is something that becomes a natural action or part of a process when you engage with your studies on a regular basis or routinely. Remember we want to learn how to be successful students and achieve improved results. With our success as students we become successful in our careers, these success factors develop along a continuum throughout ones life.

SMART PRINCIPLES

1. Simple Status; when we achieve academic results that we are happy with our brain goes into a toward state
2. Clarity & Certainty; when we are certain of the academic material we have covered we are confident of achieving result
3. Autonomy & Independence; when we have choices in the learning process we feel empowered and responsible
4. Relatedness; we see academic material as friend or foe.
 - I Friend is certain and has clarity: toward state.
 - II Foe is the unknown: Away state
5. Fairness; when we feel that the academic material being assigned to us is unfair we move to an away state which is not conducive to curiosity and learning.

SMART STAGES

1. Dependence
2. Independence
3. Interdependence

SMART TIPS

1. Take **responsibility** for the learning process.
2. Develop a study **pattern and routine**, live by it no matter how difficult it may be.
3. Set **goals** for yourself every day, week, month, year, both short term and long term.
4. Remember to begin with the **end** result in mind.
5. Work for a **toward state**.

SMART OUTCOMES

1. Minimize effort through embedding information in the brain.
2. Maximize outcome to achieve successful academic results.
3. Keep focused on attention.
4. Understand how your brain works.
5. Keep your brain happy.

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