

# **Students' Attitudes Towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course and Study Results, Trang Center, Suan Dusit University**

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## **Abstract**

The purposes of this research were to study the students' attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course and to compare the attitudes of the students with different GPAs towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course. The population of this study consisted of 23 third-year students majoring in Tourism Industry at the Trang Center, Suan Dusit University. These students were studying the first semester of the 2013 academic year. The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The statistics used in this research study consisted of percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

The research revealed the following findings. Most students received GPAs in the range of 2.51 - 3.00. The students' average attitude towards learning was at the highest level. The comparison between with the students' GPAs and the attitudes toward learning disclosed that students with GPAs of 3.01 - 3.50 had different attitudes from the students with GPAs between 2.51 - 3.00 and the students with GPAs of less than 2.50. In other words, the students in the first group had more positive attitudes towards learning than the students with the lower levels of GPAs. In particular, the students with GPAs of 3.01 - 3.50 and the students with GPAs of 2.51 - 3.00 had more positive attitudes towards learning than students with the GPA of less than 2.50, in terms of cognition and behavior. The students with GPAs of less than 2.50 had positive attitudes towards learning, in terms of feelings and emotions, of the highest level.

**Keywords:** attitude, grade point average

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## Introduction

Education management is important to development of human resources since it is the basic foundation and tool for the country's economic, social, political and cultural development. To achieve this, manpower is the major factor for the development. Education in the undergraduate level focuses on the development of students into qualified graduates with the knowledge and abilities to create wisdom for their own society. The current education management focuses on the importance of learners. The instructor needs to provide the learners with an appropriate teaching method, which focuses on their differences and applications of knowledge in their real lives. Then, they can develop themselves, according to their particular potential, and learn the most (Eiam-oohsap, 2015). Even though learners are different in terms of needs, interests, expertise and basic skills, the instructor must keep in mind that they can all learn at any time and any place. The principles and instructional processes which are successful consist of the learners' skills, intellectual ability, and attempts, as well as teaching quality and learning opportunities. The instructor should accept the learners' different learning abilities and allow them to develop themselves in terms of potential, not in comparison or competition with others. This is because different learners have different ways of learning. So, the instructor should add more activities from which the learners can learn, both inside and outside the classroom, so as to promote their thinking (Rattanawich, 2008).

In terms of education management, the instructor needs to think of the differences between learners, with serious consideration of the factors affecting their learning and learning achievement. Sathitanon (2002) stated that the factor which affected undergraduate students' learning achievement was their GPA prior to the study. This corresponds to Komol Paisarn's research findings (2007), which revealed that the factors affecting students' learning achievement were both direct and indirect, like students' background knowledge, attention, learning atmosphere, relationship with classmates, achievement motivation, family, social status, environment, teaching quality, evaluation and attitudes. It is apparent that the factors which greatly affect student's learning are mostly their personal ones which resulted in their learning quality. This aligned with Thongsong and Pongsananurak (2013) who explained that the quality of learning meant the knowledge, attitudes or skills developed from learning different subjects. The achievement resulted in partitioning the components into two areas: intellectuality and non-intellectuality. These factors had different effects on learners, depending on learners' class. The factors related to learning achievement comprised: 1) Cognitive Domain, which focuses on knowledge; 2) Affective Domain, which deals with emotions, feelings, motivation, interest in learning, attitudes and opinions towards oneself; 3) Psychomotor Domain, which deals with learning behaviors and perception. Regarding instruction, the instructor should also pay attention to the learners' attitudes towards the course. The components of knowledge, comprehension or concepts are the basic elements of

attitudes. These components are related to an individual's feelings which may be differently expressed as like, dislike, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, depending on each person's experiences and learning. Besides, attitudes also play an important role in promoting learning. Students with positive attitudes usually succeed in learning while students with negative attitudes might be not very successful in learning.

As a result, the instructor realized the significance of instruction and learners' differences and attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course, a compulsory course for the third-year students majoring in Tourism and Hospitality Management, Trang Center, Suan Dusit University. This course draws up basic knowledge, understanding and skills in tourism, since this course focuses on conservation of sustainable tourism, ecotourism, health tourism/medical tourism, cultural heritage tourism and agrotourism. However, according to the researcher's experiences in teaching this group of students and the inquiries during lecturers of the program, the students with GPAs in the lower-middle level were not really active, attentive or disciplined for class attendance. So, the researcher arranged instructional activities in class and outside, together with some project activities to develop the students' learning achievement. This helped the students to learn from group work, decrease their worries and build up their confidence again by chatting in person with them.

Consequently, the researcher would like to study the students' attitudes towards learning and the relation between the attitudes of students with different levels of GPA towards their learning results. So, it was hoped that the research findings could provide the researcher with some guidelines to develop instructional activities in this particular course in order to improve the students' learning achievement and GPA.

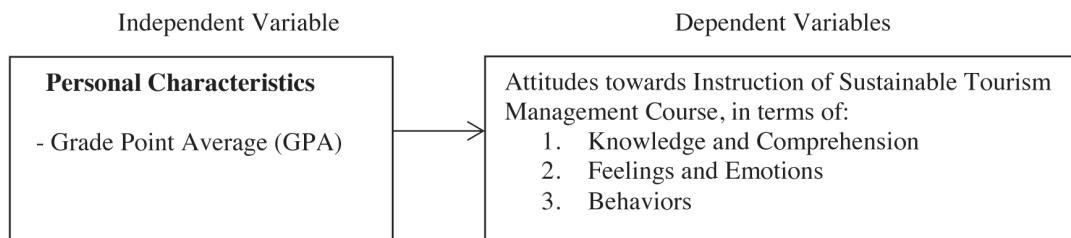
### **Objectives of Study**

1. To study levels of students' attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course
2. To compare and contrast the attitudes of students with different levels of GPA towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

The students with different study results have different attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course

## Conceptual Framework



## Methodology

This study was quantitative research and the questionnaire was used as the research instrument to collect data. The period of study lasted from June to October 2013. The details are presented below.

1. Population
2. Research Instrument
3. Collection of Data
4. Analysis of Data and Statistics for Analysis

## Population

The population of the study comprised 23 third-year students majoring in Tourism Management and Services, Trang Center, Suan Dusit University.

### Research Instruments for Data Collection

The research instrument for data collection was the questionnaire about the students' attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management. This instrument was developed, as follows.

1. The researcher reviewed documents, principles, theories and relevant studies from different information sources.
2. The content of the questionnaire was defined, and the questions were made, according to the information studied, so as to cover and correspond to the study objectives.

3. The researcher developed the questionnaire and divided the questionnaire into 3 parts.

Part 1: The questionnaire contained questions about personal characteristics, like GPA. The questionnaire included close-ended questions, in the checklist form.

Part 2: The questionnaire asked about the attitudes of the third-year Tourism Management and Services students towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course. The questions were closed-ended in the 5-rating-scale. There were 3 major aspects of attitudes: knowledge and comprehension; feelings and emotions; and behaviors. There were 5 choices and 5 levels of attitudes, according to the following Likert Scale.

Mostly agree with	with the score of	5	Points
Quite agree with	with the score of	4	Points
Disagree with	with the score of	3	Points
Greatly disagree with	with the score of	2	Points
Mostly disagree with	with the score of	1	Points

Part 3: The students' suggestion to the Sustainable Tourism Management Course

### Collection of Data

The researcher collected data from the questionnaire about the attitudes of the 23 Tourism Management and Services students with the registration numbers of 2554XX, who were enrolled in the Sustainable Tourism Management Course during the first semester of the 2013 academic year.

### Examination of Instrument Quality

The researcher collected data with the survey method. The examination of the quality of the research instrument in terms of validity and reliability was done by analyzing the validity of the questionnaire. In terms of reliability, the questionnaire was first tested by a pilot group of 10 students with the same characteristics as the population to determine Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. This questionnaire, with the Alpha Coefficient value of 0.70, was considered as satisfactorily reliable (Pongpaew, 2006). The results of reliability analysis are presented below.

The study of the third-year Tourism Management and Services students' attitudes towards the Sustainable Tourism Management Course revealed the overall reliability value of 0.89 with the reliability values of particular aspects, as follows:

1. Knowledge and Comprehension	Reliability Value at	0.77
2. Feelings and Emotions	Reliability Value at	0.73
3. Behaviors	Reliability Value at	0.77

### **Data Analysis and Statistics for Analysis**

#### 1. Statistics for Analysis of Descriptive Data to

1.1 Percentage was used to analyze the data collected from Part 1 of the questionnaire, namely the respondent's personal characteristics such as GPA.

1.2 Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected from Part 2 of the questionnaire, which investigated the level of the third-year Tourism Management and Services students' attitudes.

The corresponding responses of the 5-rating scale:

5	means	mostly agree with
4	means	greatly agree with
3	means	agree with
2	means	disagree with
1	means	extremely disagree with

According to the criteria above, the average scores were between 1 and 5 points. The scale of the score ranges could be divided into 5 ones, as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Score value for each range} &= \text{the highest score} - \text{the lowest score} \\
 &= \text{Score ranges} \\
 &= \frac{5-1}{5} \\
 &= 0.80
 \end{aligned}$$

The criteria for the 5 score ranges were divided, as follows.

Average Score of	4.21 - 5.00	means mostly agree with
Average Score of	3.41 - 4.20	means greatly agree with
Average Score of	2.61 - 3.40	means agree with
Average Score of	1.81 - 2.60	means disagree with
Average Score of	1.00 - 1.80	means extremely disagree with

### Relevant Studies

Riyapa (2007) studied the attitudes of the second grade pupils with different study results to determine their attitudes towards science instruction, towards instruction of science. The sample consisted of 15 pupils in second grade at Jamtewee Municipal School, during the second semester of the 2006 academic year. The findings showed that the pupils with different study results had different attitudes towards the instruction. The pupils with a higher level of study results had more positive attitudes towards the instruction than the pupils with the middle and low level study results.

Buara (2010) studied the development of learning business statistics, with the technique of group cooperation to develop the students' achievement results. The population was the undergraduate students in the Faculty of Management Science, Chadrakasem Rajabhat University, who studied during the first semester of the 2000 academic year. The sample consisted of 131 students that were divided into 3 groups. The statistics used were frequency, percentage, t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The studied revealed that the students with different GPAs got different average team scores on the formative tests. The students with the high level of GPAs had a higher average team score than the students with the middle and the low levels of GPA. However, the students with the middle and the low levels of GPA had no significant differences in the average team scores on the formative tests. The students with the high level of average team scores of formative tests had a higher level of midterm test scores than the students with the low level of average team scores on the formative tests. The students with the high level of average team scores on the formative tests got higher level final exam scores and overall scores than the students with the low level of average team scores on the formative tests.

Thongsong and Pongsananurak (2013) studied the factors which correlated with the learning achievement of pediatric nursing students at Kuakarun Faculty of Nursing. The research aimed to study the links between personal factors, attitudes towards the nursing professionalism, achievement motivation, learning performance, learning environment and

learning achievement and the students' study results. The sample consisted of the 257 second and third year nursing students during the 2006 academic year. The research instrument was the questionnaire. The statistics used were percentage, means, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis. The study revealed that the students with the high level of GPAs got the high level of study results because the GPAs showed the students' previous study results. The students with a high level of learning achievement were usually well-prepared with different components, like knowledge and intention. This indicated their greater readiness for learning than the students with the lower level of study results. Likewise, the students with a high level of study results generally performed better than the students with the lower level of study results and GPA. These were positively correlated with the students' achievement motivation, learning performance, attitudes towards their career and learning environment. This disclosed that the students with the high level of GPA would have more achievement motivation in learning and better learning performance, as well as more positive attitudes towards their career and more satisfaction with their learning environment.

Kotkaew (2011) studied the factors affecting the Business Administration students' learning achievement, in the High Vocational Level, College of Vocational Education, Northeastern Region 3. The objective of this study was to investigate the learning achievement and the factors affecting the students' achievement, by dividing the factors into personal factors, learning factors and factors of institute environment. The sample was the 346 second-year Business Administration students, in the High Vocational Level, who studied during the second semester of the 2007 academic year. The sample was selected by using the stratified random sampling method. The research instrument was the questionnaire. The statistics used were percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression analysis. It was found that 1) most students were female 20 years old, the average GPA range was 3.10-3.50, their parents earned less than 40,000 baht annually, and their background knowledge was vocational education; and 2) the factors affecting their learning achievement were their attitudes towards learning and their relationship with their peers.

## Results

### 1. Analysis of the Personal Data Questionnaire Responses

**Table 1** Numbers of Students and Their GPA

Description	Numbers of Students	Percentage
<b>GPA</b>		
- Less than 2.50	8	35
- 2.50 – 3.00	12	52
- 3.01 – 3.50	3	13
- 3.51 – 4.00	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

According to Table 1, it revealed that largest number of students (12), or 52%, had GPAs of 2.51-3.00, followed by the second largest number of students (8), or 35%, and the smallest number of students (3), or 13%, with GPAs of less than 2.50 and of 3.01 and 3.50, respectively.

### 2. Analysis of Students' Attitudes towards the Instruction of the Sustainable Tourism Management Course

**Table 2** Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Attitudes towards the Instruction

Students' Attitudes	$\mu$	$\sigma$	Level of Attitudes
1. Knowledge and Comprehension	4.20	0.30	High
2. Feeling and Emotion	4.21	0.26	Highest
3. Behaviors	4.22	0.27	Highest
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>Highest</b>

According to Table 2, the overview of the students' attitudes towards the instruction of Sustainable Tourism Management Course were found to be in the highest level ( $\mu = 4.21$ ). In particular aspects, the three aspects with the highest average scores were the aspect of behaviors ( $\mu = 4.22$ ) followed by the one of feelings and emotions ( $\mu = 4.21$ ), both in the highest level. The aspect of knowledge and comprehension had an average score in the high level ( $\mu = 4.20$ ).

### 3. Results of the Comparison of Attitudes of Students with Different GPAs towards the Instruction

**Table 3** Result of Comparison of Attitudes of Students with Different GPAs towards the Instruction.

Grade Point Average (GPA)	Attitudes towards Instruction							
	Knowledge and Comprehension		Feelings and Emotions		Behaviors		Total	
	$\mu$	Levels	$\mu$	Levels	$\mu$	Levels	$\mu$	Levels
Less than 2.50	4.12	High	4.18	High	4.20	High	4.16	High
2.51 – 3.00	4.14	High	4.17	High	4.24	Highest	4.18	High
3.01 – 3.50	4.21	Highest	4.12	High	4.30	Highest	4.21	Highest
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>Highest</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>High</b>

According to Table 3, the comparison between the attitudes of the students with different GPAs disclosed that the students with different GPAs had different attitudes towards the instruction. The students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had the highest level of attitudes, namely in the highest level ( $\mu = 4.21$ ), followed by the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00 and the students with the GPAs of less than 2.50, whose attitudes were in the high level ( $\mu = 4.18$ ,  $\mu = 4.16$ ), respectively.

In terms of knowledge and comprehension, the students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had the best attitudes towards the instruction, in the high level ( $\mu = 4.21$ ), followed by the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00 ( $\mu = 4.14$ ) and the students with the GPAs of less than 2.50, who had the positive attitudes in the high level ( $\mu = 4.14$ ,  $\mu = 4.12$ ), respectively.

In terms of feelings and emotions, the students with the GPAs of less than 2.50 had the most positive attitudes towards the instruction, in the high level ( $\mu = 4.18$ ), followed by

the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00 and the students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50, with their positive attitudes in the high level ( $\mu = 4.17$ ,  $\mu = 4.12$ ), respectively.

In terms of behaviors, the students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had the best attitudes towards the instruction, in the high level ( $\mu = 4.30$ ), followed by the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00 and the students with the GPAs of less than 2.50, with the positive attitudes in the high level ( $\mu = 4.24$ ,  $\mu = 4.20$ ), respectively.

## Conclusions and Discussion

### Conclusions

1. According to the analysis of personal data, it was found that most of the third-year Tourism Management and Service students (52%) had GPAs of 2.51 – 3.00.

2. According to the analysis, the students' attitudes towards the instruction of Sustainable Tourism Management Course were generally in the highest level. In particular aspects, the attitudes towards the instruction were in high level, as in the following order.

In terms of behaviors, the attitudes towards the instruction were in the high level. The instructor was found to use the language in communication well, be neatly and appropriately dressed, allow the students to ask and make suggestions to one another. The instructor was found to be ready for all classes, come to class on time and encourage the learners to sacrifice for the public and be kind to others.

In terms of feelings and emotions, the attitudes towards the instruction were in the high level. The instructor encouraged the learners to learn by themselves and respond to the needs of learning any time at any place. Moreover, the instructor also provided the appropriate format of learning which stimulated the learners to pay attention to the lesson content.

In terms of knowledge and comprehension, the attitudes toward the instruction were in the high level. There were appropriate technological media to promote learning and understanding of lesson contents. The previous lesson was revised before the new lesson started each time. The content of this course would be useful for future careers.

3. According to the result of comparing the attitudes of the students with different GPAs towards the instruction, it could be concluded, as follows. The students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had the attitudes towards the instruction in the highest level, followed by the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00, and the students with the GPA of 2.50s. The particular details are as follows.

In terms of knowledge and behavior, it was found that the students with the GPA of 3.01-3.50 had the attitude towards the instruction in the highest level, followed by the students with the GPA of 2.51-3.00 and the students with the GPA of less than 2.50.

In terms of feelings and emotions, the students with the GPA of less than 2.50 had the attitude towards the instruction in the highest level, followed by the students with the GPA of 2.51-2.30 and the students with the GPA of 3.01-3.50, respectively.

## Discussion

1. Over all students' attitudes towards the instruction were found to be in the highest level. This shows that the students had positive attitudes towards the instruction. This might result from various factors which made the students have positive attitudes towards the instruction, as follows. For example, the instructors used the appropriate language in communication, dressed well and properly, allowed the learners to ask question and give comments, and was always ready for classes, as well as encouraged the learners to learn by themselves. The previous lesson was also revised before a new lesson was introduced to the learners. The teaching models and methods stimulated the learners to pay attention to the lesson contents, with the help of appropriate technological media, and also support the students' learning and understanding of the lesson content. The students found that this course could be applied to their future careers. Besides, there were also some other external factors which helped since the instructor had added some activities for the learners to practice working together so as to learn more about one another, both in class and outside. This was in line with Kotkaew (2011), which explained that the factor which affected the students' learning achievement was their attitudes towards learning. This might result from the fact that, when the students had positive attitudes towards the curriculum, the instructor or the usefulness of the knowledge for themselves, they would have a particular aim in their study, which resulted from their own intention to achieve better learning. Another factor in the area of institute environment was their relationship with their peers, which also had some effects on their learning achievement. When the students had a good relationship with their friends, they would be motivated to come to study because they would be happy while learning. Then, with their own intention and their friends' help, their learning achievement should be better. It could be concluded that the principles for instructional management (Rattanawich, 2008) needed applied learning and community learning. Community Language Learning (CLL) was an effective teaching technique to assist the learners to help one another in analysis and discussion of direct experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, for learner-centered education.

2. The overall comparison of GPA and the students' attitudes towards their learning revealed that the students with different GPAs had different attitudes towards the instruction. The students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had different attitudes towards the instruction from

the students with the GPAs of 2.51-3.00 and the GPAs of less than 2.50. Namely, the former group had a higher level of attitudes towards the instruction than the students with the lower level of GPA because the students with the higher level of GPAs had better attitudes in terms of knowledge and comprehension of and attention to the instruction. The components of knowledge, understanding or ideas are the basic elements of attitudes and these elements are related to an individual's feelings in different forms. According to the learning results in this study, it was found that the students with good learning results would generally be happy and satisfied with the instruction. This agreed with Ladaporn Thongsong and others' study (2013) which disclosed that the students with better GPAs would also have better learning results because GPA showed each student's previous learning results. The students with a higher level of learning result should be better prepared for learning than the students with a lower level of learning result. The students with a high level of GPA would have positive achievement motivation and good learning performance, as well as positive attitudes towards their professional study and satisfactory perception of their learning environment.

The comparison of the attitudes of the students with different GPAs towards the instruction could be discussed in particular aspects, as follows.

1. The students with better GPAs had better attitudes towards the instruction in terms of knowledge, comprehension and behavior.
2. The students with the lowest level of GPAs had the best attitudes towards the instruction in terms of feelings and emotions.

This could be further discussed, as follows.

1. In terms of knowledge and comprehension, it revealed that the students with the GPA of 3.01-3.05 had the highest level of attitudes. The instructors provided interesting, modern and technological media to promote learning and understanding of the lesson content. The students realized that the lesson content could be useful for their future careers. The instructor revised the previous lesson before starting the current one, which aligned with Pinrattananont (2009). which disclosed that the factor which affected the learning achievement was the GPA. The factors, like appropriate classrooms and detailed teaching materials, with appropriate design and colors, helped the instruction well.

2. In terms of behavior, it was revealed that the students with the GPAs of 3.01-3.50 had the highest level of attitude towards the instruction. This might result from the instructor's ability to use language well in communication, proper attire, provision of chances for asking questions and giving comments. Moreover, the instructors were always well-prepared for the lessons. The learning achievement was important of the educational system which was linked with different factors in learning, like learners' characteristics, instructors' characteristics, teaching activities and institute condition. This corresponded to

Savavibool's (2011) which disclosed that the students were satisfied with the instructor's personality and proper attire as an exemplar for them, followed by the instructor's punctuality. This was because, as a good instructor, besides knowledge, the instructor should also be equipped with good personality and appropriate attire. This could make the learners respect, trust and confidently imitate, which would also result in successful instruction.

3. In terms of feelings and emotions, it was disclosed that the students with GPAs of less than 2.50 had positive attitudes towards the instructions in the highest level. Probably, it was because the instructors encouraged the learners to learn by themselves to respond to their learning needs at all places at all times. The instructors allowed the students consult with them for advice. The assigned tasks also helped develop the students' skills. The teaching models also stimulated the learners to pay more attention to the lesson contents. So, the students with good learning results had better understanding of the lesson contents than the students with a lower level of learning results. The students with the learning results in the middle and the low levels might not have fully understood the lesson content in the classroom. They might have had some doubts in the lesson but did not dare to ask any questions in class. As a result, if the instructors allowed the students to come to meet for advice, the students could have been more relieved and might have been able to ask some questions in class. This resulted in the higher level of the attitudes of the students with low GPAs than the attitudes of the students with higher GPA. This aligned with the concept of successful principles and process of instructional management (Rattanawich, 2008). which should be arranged based on the learners' ability. Each learner is different in terms of learning, so the time each learner spends on learning should also be different. Likewise, the learners' intellectuality in class should also vary along different learners.

### **Guidelines on Instructional Management for Student Development**

The research findings above revealed that the students with the highest level of GPAs would have positive attitudes in terms of knowledge, comprehension and behaviors but the lowest level of attitudes in terms of feelings and emotions. This might result from the fact that the instructors focused on the learners' self-learning in the previous instructional management, by assigning work and allowing the students to meet for advice. So, the students with good learning results did not feel that the instructors paid any attention to them because these students already understood the lessons well. This was different from the weak students who could be more sensitive about the instructors' attention because the instructor allowed them to meet for advice outside the classroom.

So, the instructors should arrange the learning environment which could facilitate the cooperative learning in small groups which would not make learners' differences apparent. The scores should be defined as the criteria indicating each group's development. In each group, there should be good students and students with different learning results, so as to

enable them to cooperate with, help and encourage one another, as well as be responsible for their own group. In this way, good students would help weaker students and improve the group performance and score. This could enable interactions among the students with different learning results. Then, all students would feel as part of their own group. Meanwhile, the instructor should also provide the students with some advice in every single activity.

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