

MODE OF STUDY AND STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of student's mode of study on their achievement in English Language at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted an ex-post-facto design. Results of students in English language courses in both regular and distance learning modes numbering 4607 and 599 respectively over a period of four sessions were analyzed using the t-test and chi-square statistics. The findings were that significant difference existed in the English Language achievements of students, and that academic grades obtained by students in each of the sessions under study were significantly dependent on mode of study. Students in distance learning mode performed better in three sessions: 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010-2011 while students in regular mode performed better only in 2011/2012 academic sessions. It was therefore concluded that the notion of superiority of regular mode over distance learning mode of study is unfounded and should be jettisoned. The study recommended among others, that institutions should continue to promote distance learning mode of study to absorb people who could not make it through the regular mode.

Key words: Mode of study, Regular, Distance learning, Achievement, English language

INTRODUCTION

Conventional institutions of higher learning in Nigeria provide academic programmes in various modes like regular, sandwich and distance learning. The distance learning mode of these institutions is usually run on weekends and in some others at evenings. This

type of distance learning has come to be known as Teacher-Mediated Option (TMO) due to face-to-face teacher-learner interactions (Mbonu & Alabekee, 2010). This mode is institutionalized to mitigate the rising demand for higher education coupled with the incapacity of institutions to absorb the teeming applicants within the conventional regular mode.

As a matter of fact, no country in the world can provide adequately for her citizens' higher education needs through regular mode alone. In the United Kingdom, the Open University UK (OUUK) was established in 1969 to address this gap.

The OUUK is reputed for its quantitative and qualitative educational delivery (Ukpo, 2006). Other countries like the USA, India, Kenya and numerous others have their own brand of distance learning programme to address their own peculiar needs.

Distance learning is an out-of-school education system intended to meet the needs of learners isolated by geographical barriers and some handicaps (Obi, 2000). It is meant to absorb those who for one reason or the other could not be placed in the regular mode. The disparity in application and admission pattern in Nigeria's tertiary education is one justification for distance learning. For instance, the application and admission pattern as indicated in the year 2013 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) left much to be desired. Whereas a total of 1,670,833 candidates applied for admission to universities, 28,977 to polytechnics; and 28,445 to colleges of education, only 520,000 admission spaces were available in 128 federal, state and private universities, 76 federal, state and private polytechnics; and over 63 federal colleges of education (Arenyeka & Asomba, 2013). This means that only 30.09 per cent of candidates stood a chance for admission. Without alternative arrangement, the majority 69.91 per cent of candidates would join other previous sets of unlucky candidates to swell the number of applicants the following year and the cycle continues ad infinitum. Distance learning

mode therefore, is about the only available option to cater for the interest of these left-over. It is expected that the distance learning mode, while accommodating the isolated but interested people, will raise literacy level of the population incrementally and systematically, and consequently stimulate development and alleviate poverty (Federal Ministry of Education, 2002).

In recent time, however, the quality of distance learning has come under serious attack. There is this notion that graduates of distance learning mode are not as effective as their counterpart from regular mode. There are instances where employers of labour discriminate against certificates obtained through distance learning mode as a result of perceived poor quality of distance learning programmes. For them, distance education produces half-baked; and the mode is a reservoir of not-so-brilliant students and a hotchpotch of charlatans and never-do-wells, where certificates are a mockery of academic standards. Perhaps, it is on account of this that the National University Commission (NUC) once clamped down on universities running distance learning programmes in Nigeria.

Similar allegation of low quality has been preferred against Sandwich mode. Against that backdrop, Adiaha (2010) carried out a study in which the academic achievement of students in regular and Sandwich modes were compared. The result showed that there was no significant difference between the performances of regular and Sandwich students in Agricultural Science Education in their overall degree course examinations. In another study, Salami and Raji (2006) found that the Sandwich degree graduates in Lagos State were professionally competent in the labour market. However, it is not empirically determined yet whether the above findings also extend to distance learning. Moreover, since English language courses are compulsory to students, finding their

relative performances in this area is of common interest. The present study seeks to contribute in filling this gap.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Distance learning provides opportunity for education to reach the masses of the people irrespective of geography, age and other barriers. The complementary role of distance learning has ensured that a greater percentage of citizens isolated by limited spaces in our institutions of learning have opportunity to realize their ambition. But, the notion that distance learning cannot compare with regular mode of study in terms of quality of output tends to undermine the distance learning mode. Since students from both sides of the divide pass through the same learning and evaluation process, their comparative achievements are necessary to understand their worth. The question then is do students in regular mode perform better than their counterparts in distance learning mode?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to investigate whether differences exist in the performances of regular and distance learning students in English language courses over a period of four sessions.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated to achieve the research purpose:

HO1: There was no significant difference in English language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes for 2008/2009 academic session.

HO2: Academic grades of students in English language courses for 2008/2009 session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

HO3: There was no significant difference in English language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes for 2009/2010 academic session.

HO4: Academic grades of students in English language courses for 2009/2010 session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

HO5: There was no significant difference in English language performances of students in regular and distance learning mode for 2010/2011 academic session.

HO6: Academic grades of students in English language courses for 2010/2011 session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

HO7: There was no significant difference in English language performance of student in regular and distance learning modes for 2011.2012 academic session.

HO8: Academic grades of students in English language courses for 2011/2012 session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive and ex-post-facto designs. It involved analysis of data on academic achievement of regular and distance learning students over a period of four (4) sessions: 2008/2009 to 2011/2012. The scope covered results of all students in the school of Agriculture and Home Economic Education (SAHE) and school of Business Education (SBE), in Federal College of Education (Technical) Umuze Anambra State, Nigeria. The target courses comprised all English language and Communication Skills courses namely, GSE 101, GSE 103, GSE 104, GSE 111 and GSE 321.

The population for the study was 4607 and 599 for students in regular and distance learning modes respectively. All the English Language and Communication Skills courses' results for the period were sourced from the Exams & Records Unit of the College and used in the study.

Data obtained were based on the frequency of students' letter grades in line with the Nigeria Certificate (NCE) grading system. The letter grades (A, B, C, D, E, and F) were assigned the following points on the scale: 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Hypotheses were tested using the t-test and chi-square statistics at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESULTS

HO1: There was no significant difference in English language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2008/2009 academic session.

Table 1: t-test of Difference in Regular and Distance Learning Students' English Language Performance in 2008/2009 Academic session

Mode	Mean	S.D	N	Df	T-calc	T-Crit.	Decision
Dist Learning	3.89	1.49	44	1352	6.18	1.960	Null hypothesis rejected
Regular	2.53	1.39	1309				

$P \geq 0.05$

The result of the analysis in table 1 indicates that the calculated t-value is 6.89 which is greater than the critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significant and 1352 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significance is therefore rejected. There was significant difference in English language performances of regular and distance learning students in 2008/2009 academic session. The mean achievement (3.89) of distance learning students was higher than the mean achievement (2.53) of their regular counterparts.

HO2: Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2008/2009 academic session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis of Mode of Study and Students' Academic Grades in English Language Courses in 2008/2009 Academic Session.

		Letter Grades										
Mode		A	B	C	D	E	F	Row Total	.Df	Chi-Square Calc.	Chi-square Crit	Decision
Dist. Learning	O	5	15	8	5	8	3	44	5	57.89	11.07	Sig
	E	(1.17)	(3.71)	(8.13)	(5.63)	(12.94)	(12.42)					
Regular	O	31	99	242	168	390		1309				
	E	(34.83)	(110.29)	(241.87)	(167.37)	(385.06)	(369.58)					
		36	114	250	173	398	382	1353				

$P \geq 0.05$

Since the calculated chi-square of 57.89 is greater than the table value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance the null hypothesis is therefore rejected and conclusion drawn that students academic grades in English Language courses in 2008/2009 academic session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

Ho3: There was no significant difference in English Language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2009/2010 academic session.

Table 3: t-test of Difference in Regular and Distance Learning Students' English Language Performances in 2009/2010 Academic Session

Mode	Mean	S.D	N	Df	T-calc	T-Crit.	Decision
Dist .L	3.22	1.58	233	1208	49	1.960	Null hypothesis rejected
Reg.	2.73	1.44	976				

$P \geq 0.05$

The table 3 shows that the calculated t value is 49 which is greater than critical t-value at 1209 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis of no significance is therefore rejected. There was significant difference in regular and distance learning Students' English Language performance in 2009/2010 academic session.

HO4: Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2009/2010 academic session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

Table 4: Chi-square Analysis of mode of study and students' Academic Grades in English Language Courses in 2009/2010 Academic Session

Letter Grades

Mode		A	B	C	D	E	F	Row Total	Df	Chi-Square alc.	Chi-square Crit	Decision
Dist. L	O	21	13	56	30	53	40	233	5	24.19	11.07	Sig.
	E	13.3	21.5	45.1	33.15	70.34	49.53					
		0	9	0								

Reg.	O	48	79	178	142	312	217	976
	E	55.7	90.4	188.	138.8	294.66	207.4	
		0	2	9	5		7	
		69	112	234	172	365	257	120
								9

$P \geq 0.05$

Table 4 above indicates that the calculated chi-square value of 24.19 is greater than the critical chi-square value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance and 5 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significance is therefore rejected. Students' academic grades in English Language in 2009/2010 academic session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

HO 5: There was no significant difference in English Language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2010/2011 academic session.

Table 5: t-test of Difference in Regular and Distance Learning Students' English Language Performance in 2010/2011 Academic Session

Mode	Mean	S.D	N	Df	T-calc	T-Crit.	Decision
Dist .L	3.19	1.60	195	1362	18	1.960	Null hypothesis rejected
Reg.	3.01	1.53	1168				

$P \geq 0.05$

Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value is 18 which is greater than the critical table value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance and 1362 degrees of freedom. The null

hypothesis is subsequently rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted. There was significant difference in English Language achievement of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2010/2011 academic session.

HO 6: Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2010/2011 academic session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis of Mode of study and Students' Academic Grades in English Language Courses in 2010/2011 Academic Session

Mode		Letter Grades						Row Total	.Df	Chi-Square Calc	Chi-square Crit	Decision
		A	B	C	D	E	F					
Dist. L	O	20	25	41	29	45	35	195	5	11.93	11.07	Sig.
	E	11.30	24.89	49.64	25.32	41.63	42.21					
Reg.	O	59	149	306	148	246	260	1168				
	E	67.70	149.11	297.36	151.68	248.46	252.80					
		79	174	347	177	291	295					

$P < 0.05$

The data in table 6 show that the calculated t-value of 11.93 is greater than the critical value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance and 5 degrees of freedom. The null

hypothesis is therefore rejected. Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2010/2011 academic session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

HO 7: There was no significant difference in English Language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2011/2012 academic session.

Table 7: t-test of Difference in Regular and Distance Learning Students' English Language Performances in 2011/2012 Academic Session

Mode	Mean	S.D	N	Df	T-calc	T-Crit.	Decision
Dist .L	2.72	1.43	127	1280	31	1.960	Null hypothesis rejected
Reg.	3.345	1.59	1154				

$P \geq 0.05$

Table 7 showed that the calculated t-value is 31 and greater than the critical t-value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance and 1280 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. There was significant difference in regular and distance learning students' English Language performances in 2011/2012 academic session.

Ho 8: Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2011/2012 academic session were not significantly dependent on mode of study.

Table 8: Chi-Square Analysis of Mode of Study and Students' Academic Grades in English Language Courses in 2011/2012 Academic Session.

Letter Grades

Mode		A	B	C	D	E	F	Row	. Df	Chi- Square Calc.	Chi- square e Crit	Decision
Dist. L	O	4	10	30	16	36	31	127	5	20.64	11.07	Null Hypothesis rejecter
	E	10.31	22.90	28.6	16.95	25.78	22.41					
Reg.	O	100	221	259	155	224	195	115				
	E	93.69	208.1	260.	154.05	234.22	203.59	4				
		104	231	289	171	260	226	128	1			

$P \geq 0.05$

Table 8 indicates that the calculated chi-square value (20.64) is greater than the table value OF 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance and 5 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis of no significance is therefore rejected. Academic grades of students in English Language courses in 2011/2012 academic session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The result of the hypothesis one indicated that there was significant difference in English Language performances of regular and distance learning students in 2008/2009 academic session. The mean score of students in distance learning mode is greater than the mean score of their regular counterpart. Similarly, the chi-square analysis testing of

hypothesis two indicated that students' grades in English Language courses for that session were significantly dependent on students' mode of study.

In hypothesis two, the result was that there was significant difference in the performance of students in regular and distance learning modes in English Language courses in 2009/2010 academic session. Students in distance learning also performed better. The chi-square test of independence under hypothesis four indicated that students' grades in English Language in that academic session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

The result of hypothesis five showed that the null hypothesis was also rejected. There was significant difference in the performance of students in regular and distance learning modes in English Language courses in 2010/2011 academic session. Again, students in distance learning mode performed better than their counterparts in regular mode. The chi-square test of independence for the hypothesis six also showed that the grades obtained by students in English Language in that session were significantly dependent on mode of study.

In hypothesis seven, a significant difference was also found in the English Language performances of students in regular and distance learning modes in 2011/2012 academic session. However, students in regular mode performed better than their counterparts in distance learning mode. The chi-square analysis for hypothesis eight also showed that grades obtained by students were significantly dependent on mode of study in 2011/2012 academic session.

In summary, students in distance learning mode performed better than those in regular mode in three out of the four sessions under study. They performed better in

2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic session. The findings are consistent with that of Adiaha (2010) that debunked the notion of regular mode superiority over sandwich mode in Agricultural Science Education. The finding equally supports the earlier work of Salami and Raji (2006) which suggests that the mode of study has no influence on graduates' productivity using sandwich and regular programme as basis of comparison. Again the finding has demonstrated that the distance learning can provide a leeway for millions of admission seekers as stated in Mbonu and Alabekee (2010). A study to determine reason(s) behind the downward trend in the performances of students in distance learning mode over the sessions vis a vis incremental changes in the mean performances of their regular counterparts, as well as relative future performance is necessary for a better understanding.

CONCLUSION

The notion of superiority of regular mode of study over other modes like distance learning is unfounded. People should be evaluated based on personal capabilities and skills than mode of certification. In all modes of study, quality of programme delivery is all that matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Institutions should continue to deliver knowledge through distance learning mode of study to absorb those left out in regular mode.
2. Appointment into positions should be made without bias to mode of certification of graduates.
3. Employers of labor should appraise applicants based on personal qualities and skills rather than certifications.

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