

Factors Affecting Performance of Undergraduate Students in Construction Related Disciplines

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Abstract

Academic performance of students in Nigerian institutions has been of much concern to all and sundry hence the need to assess the factors affecting performance of undergraduate students in construction related discipline in Nigeria. A survey design was employed with questionnaires administered on students in the department of Quantity Surveying, Estate Management, Architecture and Industrial Design in Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria, using a convenient sampling approach. Data were analyzed using percentage, frequency, mean item score and Kruskal-Wallis test. The study revealed that parents and lecturers have the highest influence on the success of undergraduate students in construction related disciplines in Nigerian while school board members have the lesser impact. Concentration, lack of reading habit and class size are the major identified factors affecting the performance of undergraduates while Cumulative Grade Point Average and Continuous Assessment and Examination are the best means of measuring student success. The study therefore recommend that parents and lecturers should be made aware of their roles in the success of their wards while necessary facilities in term of accommodation and serene environment on campus should be provided for students as this will enhance students' concentration, hence increasing the rate of students' success.

Keywords: Academic, Construction Students, Nigeria, Stakeholders, Students' Success

1. Introduction

Over the years, some educators have argued that entry standards are the most important determinants of success in universities; others maintain that non-academic factors must also be considered. This implies that there is considerable evidence that the views and expectations about success held by lecturers and students are not always consistent. Fadokun (2009) asserted that schools are established with the aim of impacting knowledge and worldwide institutions have come to be recognized as centers of knowledge accumulation and knowledge transfer with students being the most essential asset for any educational institute.

According to Akomolafe and Olorunfemi-Olabisi (2011) stakeholders in Nigerian educational system ranging from; parents, guardians, lecturers, family members, counsellors, and many others, are so much concerned about students' achievements and academic standard. Reason for this is probably because success in education is highly instrumental to the development of a nation. However, as students' progress from admission to graduation, a complex interaction of some factors such as personal, social, academic and institutional factors tend to influence the quality of their educational experiences. The issue of poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has therefore become a source of concern to most parties involved in the delivery of quality education within the country. This unhealthy situation has led to the widely acclaimed fallen standard of education in Nigeria (Akiri and Ugborugbo, 2009; Bamidele and Bamidele, 2013).

Studies in the past have identified study habit, student's self-concept, teacher's qualification, teaching method, school environment and government as factors influencing students' academic performance and the primary environment of the students is the home and it stands to exert tremendous impact on students' achievements. Some research also reveals that there exist a relationship between academic achievement and some demographic characteristics. According to Keith, Byerly, Floerchinger, Pence and Thornberg (2006) there exists a positive relationship between age and academic performance. Kaur, Chung, and Lee (2010) however observed that age does not significantly contribute to academic performance of university students in distance learning. There is also gender differences in the academic performance of male and female students (Cole and Espinoza, 2008; Jaeger and Eagan, 2007). Yousefi (2010) found relationship between family income and academic achievement of high school students, while Tuttle (2004) found that students' academic performance correlates with locality of residence and household income.

The investigations of the factors that influence academic performance of students have attracted the interest of most stakeholders in the education sector in Nigeria and this is because of the public outcries concerning the low standard of education in the country (Wiseman, 1973; Sogbetun, 1981). This study therefore assessed the factors affecting the performance of undergraduate students in construction related discipline in Nigeria with a view to understand some of the factors for success which may lead to innovative ways of providing a more successful academic atmosphere in the universities. In achieving this stated aim, this research assessed the level of influence of stakeholders on the success of construction related undergraduates in Nigeria. It also assessed the measures of students' success and factors affecting their performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *Stakeholders of the Educational System*

The traditional definition of a stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Freeman 1984). Olander (2007) stated that in terms of achieving a project, a project stakeholder would be a person or group of people who has vested interest in the success of a project and the environment within which the project operates. Hence, stakeholders in the educational system can be seen as those individual or group of people who has a stake or vested interest in the success of the education sector. The stakeholders of the educational system can be divided in two following Atkin and Skitmore (2008) internal and external classification of stakeholders.

The Internal Stakeholders are those who work within the school system on a daily basis and who largely control what goes on there. They include lecturers, and, to some extent, school boards (Administration). Lecturers base on achievement motivation, attitude of students and teacher’s teaching method have significant relationships with academic achievement (Ilogu, 2007). In other words, good interaction between students and lecturers enhances better performance of the former. These days, it is not uncommon for students to blame their lecturers when they fail and sometime claim that examination is not a true test of knowledge. Agreeing with this assertion will only mean there is no need for teaching because examination as method of evaluation is used to get the feedback of progress from the learners. Anikweze (2005) argues that evaluation is a pertinent aspect of good teaching and learning because no matter how efficient the teacher, how intelligent the students, how adequate the auto-visual equipment, if no provision is made for some evaluation of progress, the teaching effort may be completely invalidated.

School board (Administration) on the other hand is a branch of university or college employees responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution and separate from faculty and academics. The key administrative responsibilities of the school board or administration includes: admission; supervision of academic affairs such as hiring, promotion, tenure, and evaluation (with faculty input where appropriate); maintenance of official records; maintenance and audit of financial flows and records; maintenance of construction of campus buildings; safety and security of people and property on the campus.

The External Stakeholders are those outside the day-to-day work of the schools who have a strong interest in school outcomes but who do not directly determine what goes into producing those outcomes. Examples include; parents, family members, peer group etc. Parents play a vital role in academic success of students as expectations from families can enhance or discourage students from achieving in school. Irvine (1990) observed that many students perform better academically when their parents expect them to do well in school. Also Goddard (2003) opined that support from family members is another factor that impacts heavily on the academic achievement of students.

Peer group according to Walberg (1981) is an important stakeholder in connection to student’s success. The kind of friends a student keeps and spends time with is important to what they do in college and how they feel about their experiences (Kuh, 1993). A large part of the impact of college is determined by the extent and content of one’s interactions with major agents of socialization on campus. Astin (1993) asserted that peers are the single most potent source of influence, affecting virtually every aspect of a student’s development.

2.2 *Measuring Students Success*

When students are admitted to a higher education institution there is an inferred assumption that they will be capable of successfully completing the course in which they are permitted to enrol. To knowingly admit students who, for whatever reason, have no chance of academic success would be immoral. Therefore, it is necessary to have entry requirements that permit valid student selection decisions to be made.

Assessments differ widely in nature and quality, and assessment policies as well as practices are often applied in different ways across school and programme types. It is a process prescribed for testing qualification, an exercise designed to examine progress or knowledge (Tobih, 2012). Diverse means of measuring students’ success exist and this includes: Continuous Assessment (CA) and Examination, Grade Point Average (GPA), Graduation and retention rate etc.

Examinations which is an organized activity aimed at determining the cumulative or broad knowledge in a students’ educational development (Tobih, 2012), have been widely used to evaluate student’s success and performance in formal school settings. At a higher education level, it helps to establish the integrity of the degree or certificate awarded by any higher institution. When CA and Examination are used to find out students’ level of understanding, the examiner must consider the validity and reliability of the test instruments used for this purpose. Anikweze (2005) suggests that the purpose of test is to identify or discover what a person can do under certain controlled circumstances. Thus the examiner must not deviate from the objectives upon which the tests are based. Tobih (2012) further assert that the test can be rendered invalid and unreliable if not administered under a favourable condition no matter what effort went into the preparation of the test. Thus examinations serve evaluation purposes and are meaningful to all parties involved if it is used to motivate average learners.

Also the practice of using school matriculation results as the sole or primary determinant for university entrance is common in many institutions, but in general, the ability of these techniques to predict student success has been quite limited (McKenzie and Schweitzer, 2001; Fraser and Killen, 2003).

2.3 Factors Affecting Student's Success

There is a range of factors affecting the quality of performance of undergraduate students. In identifying the factors affecting the quality of academic success, a series of variables are to be considered (Waters and Marzano, 2006). There are some students who devote most of their times to their studies especially during examination periods and yet, performed below expectation in their final examinations. This can be attributed to undue stress and a whole lot of other factors. Factors such as parents' support and type of parenting (single or two parenting system) could also account for variation in student's performance (Eweniyi, 2002; Okolie *et al.*, 2014). Also study shows that social background remains one of the major sources of educational inequality. In other words, educational success depends largely on the socio-economic status of one's parents (Okolie, Inyiagu, Elom, Ndem and Nwuzo, 2014).

Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh (2004) observed that the curriculum planning and physical expansion without adequate and sustainable human and material resources would definitely fail to produce the desired results. The ability of higher institutions to produce quality graduates depends largely on the quantity and quality of teachers available. Ephraim (2004) opined that Nigerian public institutions have high enrolments without enough qualified instructors and this has resulted to the worsened situation of staff/student ratio which is to the detriment of student's learning and academic research.

Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder (2004) identified 32 factors that could affect students success in general, and they include: fear; anxiety; confidence; concentration; health and wellbeing, social factors: peer group; family background; religion; home problems e.g. Break ups of parent; infrastructure for learning; personal or family crisis, economic factors: financial problem and stress, environmental factors: good learning environment; class size; environmental condition (peace in the locality crisis e.tc); teaching and training method, personal factors: lack of reading habit and reading plan; unwillingness to assume full responsibility; playing and wasteful time spending; interest in a course; lack of self-discipline; procrastination ; lack of desire, decision and determination; bad attitude towards school; lack of initiative and use of imagination; poor literacy skills of students; lack of self-discipline; lack of maturity; laziness or apathy; inadequate or poor exam preparation, academic factors: lack of provision of a bridge between theory and practical; heavy course workload.

This study therefore adopt these Crosnoe *et al.*, (2004) factors in examining the performance and success of students in construction related disciplines in Nigeria.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey design and data collection was through well-structured questionnaires administered to construction related undergraduates students using convenience sampling method. The total population were the students of 200level, 300level and 500level in the departments of Quantity Surveying, Estate Management, Architecture and Industrial Design of Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria. The 100level and 400level students were exempted from the study population due to the unavailability of Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for 100level students and unavailability of all 400level students as they were on industrial training programme as at the time of this research. Table 1 shows the population and sample size of the study. The size was determined using the formulae:

$$S = \frac{n}{1 + n(e)^2}$$

Where, n= Number of respondent, e=10% level of precision which is $\pm 10\%$

Table 1: Sample size for the category of respondents

Department	Population				Sample size			
	200L	300L	500L	Total	200L	300L	500L	Total
Quantity surveying	105	98	93	296	51	49	48	148
Industrial Design	87	79	83	294	47	44	45	136
Architecture	96	89	85	270	49	47	46	142
Estate Management	84	79	72	235	46	44	42	132
Total	372	345	333	1095	101	95	97	558

Out of 558 questionnaires administered, 173 were filled and returned and this represents 31% of the total questionnaire sent out which is considered sufficient for the study based on the assertion of Moser and Kalton (1999) that the result of a survey could be considered as biased and little significant if the return rate was lower than 20-30%.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Respondents' Information

Result in table 2 shows the general characteristics of respondents. It is observed that most of the students sampled are from the Quantity Surveying department while about one quarter are from Architecture department. The least represented department is Estate management. Also most of the students sampled are from 500level while the 300level students were the least represented. About two third of the students sampled attended private secondary schools before proceeding to the institution and a little above half of the sampled students stays on campus.

Table 2: Summary of characteristics of respondent

Categories	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Department of respondents	Quantity Surveying	62	35.8
	Estate Management	33	19.1
	Architecture	43	24.9
	Industrial Design	35	20.2
	Total	173	100.0
Level of respondents	200 level	52	30.1
	300 level	45	26.0
	500 level	76	43.9
	Total	173	100.0
Secondary school attended	Private Owned	129	74.6
	Government Owned	44	25.4
	Total	173	100.0
Mode of accommodation	On campus	93	53.8
	Off campus	80	46.2
	Total	173	100.0

4.2 Stakeholders and Students' Success

Using Kruskal Wallis test (Degree of freedom (DF) = 3: H-calculated (Hcal) = -2.03: $X^2 = 7.78$ at 10% level of significance), it could be deduced that there is no significant difference between the sample means of Quantity Surveying, Estate Management, Architecture and Industrial Design student in ranking the relevance of stakeholders on the success of construction related undergraduates in Nigeria. This means all the group of respondents are in agreement and overall mean calculated can be accepted as representing individual opinion.

Result in table 3 shows the level of relevance of stakeholders on success of construction related undergraduates in Nigeria. Respondents believed that parents and lecturers are the most significant stakeholders whose impact can affect students' performance. The school board have the least impact in students' performance as observed from the table.

Table 3: Relevance of stake holders to the success of undergraduates in Nigeria

Criteria	QSV		ESM		ARC		IDD		Average	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Parents	4.74	1	4.70	1	4.72	1	4.71	1	4.72	1
Lecturers	3.94	2	3.91	2	3.93	2	3.91	2	3.92	2
Peer group	3.66	3	3.70	3	3.70	3	3.69	3	3.68	3
Family members	3.44	4	3.33	5	3.44	5	3.40	5	3.41	5
School board	3.44	4	3.39	4	3.49	4	3.43	4	3.44	4

Note: QSV ↔ Quantity surveying students; ESM ↔ Estate management students; ARC ↔ Architecture students; IDD ↔ Industrial design students

4.3 Measures of Students' Success and Factors Affecting Students' Performance

Result in table 4 shows that 80.3% of the respondent agreed that CGPA is a good means of determining students' success, while only 19.7% of the respondents disagreed. On the use of continuous assessment (CA) and examination, about 77% of the respondent agreed by indicating yes and about 23% of the respondents disagreed. Also 56.6% agreed with using graduation rate to ascertain students' success, while 43.3% disagreed.

Table 4: Measures of student success

Measures	Criteria	Frequency	Percent
CGPA	Yes	139	80.3
	No	34	19.7
	Total	173	100.0
CA and Examination	Yes	133	76.9
	No	40	23.1
	Total	173	100.0
Graduation rate	Yes	98	56.6
	No	75	43.4
	Total	173	100.0

Using Kruskal Wallis test (Degree of freedom (DF) = 3: H-calculated (Hcal) = -15.24: $X^2 = 41.42$ at 10% level of significance) it could be deduced that there is no difference between the sample means of Quantity Surveying, Estate Management, Architecture and Industrial Design students in ranking the factors affecting student performance of construction related undergraduates in Nigeria. This means all the group of respondents are in agreement and overall mean calculated can be accepted as representing individual opinion.

In ranking the factors affecting performance of construction related undergraduates in Nigeria as detailed in table 5, concentration of students was ranked the highest by all respondents, followed by lack of reading habit and reading plan, class size, fear and influence of peer group. There is also a general consensus that religion is not a major factor affecting the performance of students in construction related discipline. Although it has its mean score above average of 2.5 it still ranked the least among the identified factors.

Table 5: Factors affecting Students' Performance

Factors	QSV		ESM		ARC		IDD		Average	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Fear	4.31	4	4.27	3	4.28	3	4.29	4	4.29	4
Anxiety	3.71	30	3.73	29	3.72	30	3.71	29	3.72	29
Confidence	3.76	28	3.79	28	3.79	28	3.77	28	3.77	28
Concentration	4.44	1	4.39	1	4.47	1	4.43	1	4.43	1
Health and well being	4.02	22	4.06	15	4.07	17	4.06	15	4.05	18
Peer group	4.23	6	4.24	5	4.23	5	4.23	5	4.23	5
Family background	4.05	17	4.00	21	4.07	17	4.06	15	4.05	18
Religion	3.68	32	3.64	32	3.63	32	3.66	32	3.65	32
Home problems e.g. break ups of parent	4.03	19	3.97	23	4.09	16	4.03	21	4.03	22
Infrastructure for learning	4.18	7	4.15	9	4.12	13	4.14	10	4.15	10
Personal or family crisis	3.95	26	3.94	25	3.95	24	3.94	25	3.95	25
Financial problem and stress	4.16	8	4.15	9	4.12	13	4.14	10	4.14	11
Good learning environment	4.03	19	4.03	18	4.09	15	4.06	15	4.05	28
Class size	4.34	2	4.27	3	4.30	2	4.31	2	4.31	3
Environmental condition (peace in the locality crisis e.tc)	4.13	10	4.15	9	4.23	5	4.17	7	4.17	7
Teaching and training method	4.11	13	4.09	13	4.07	17	4.09	14	4.09	14
Lack of reading habit and reading plan	4.34	2	4.33	2	4.28	3	4.31	2	4.32	2
Unwillingness to assume full responsibility	4.13	10	4.12	12	4.14	9	4.14	10	4.13	12
Playing and wasteful time spending	4.02	22	4.03	18	4.14	9	4.06	15	4.06	15
Interest in a course	4.02	22	3.91	26	4.00	22	3.97	24	3.98	24
Procrastination	4.13	10	4.18	8	4.19	8	4.17	7	4.16	9
Lack of desire, decision and determination	4.06	16	4.06	15	4.05	21	4.06	15	4.06	15
Bad attitude towards school	4.05	17	4.00	21	4.07	17	4.03	21	4.04	21
Lack of initiative and use of imagination	4.10	14	4.06	15	4.00	22	4.06	18	4.06	15
Poor literacy skills of students	4.16	8	4.21	7	4.14	9	4.17	7	4.17	7
Lack of self-discipline	4.10	14	4.09	14	4.14	9	4.11	13	4.11	13
Lack of maturity	3.73	29	3.70	30	3.70	31	3.71	29	3.71	30
Laziness or apathy	4.24	5	4.24	5	4.19	8	4.23	5	4.23	5
Inadequate or poor exam preparation	3.89	27	3.91	26	3.86	26	3.89	27	3.88	27
Lack of provision of a bridge between theory and practical	4.00	25	3.97	23	3.84	27	3.94	25	3.94	26
Heavy course workload	3.69	31	3.67	31	3.77	29	3.71	29	3.71	30

Note: QSV ↔ Quantity surveying students; ESM ↔ Estate management students; ARC ↔ Architecture students; IDD ↔ Industrial design students

4.4 Discussion of Findings

Prior to this study, indications show that all stakeholders of the educational system are relevant to academic

achievement of students. Findings from this research shows that the level of involvement of stakeholders is above average, but the parents and lecturers have higher impact on academic achievement of students. This further corroborates Hale (2001), Goddard (2003) and Barnard (2004) findings which revealed that academic achievement of students depends on their parental care and support as parents tend to help inspire, support, care for, and sustain their children in education, thus helping them to succeed academically. More so, these findings supports Irvine (1999); Bamidele and Bamidele (2013) assertion that teachers/lectures are key factor for student's success. Hence students and lecturers have a joint responsibility for student success and the first stage in accepting this responsibility is for both parties to gain a better understanding of the processes that influence student success (Fraser and Killen, 2003). This is contrary to the view of researchers such as Schmelzer, Schmelzer, Figler and Brozo (1987) who are of the opinion that the responsibility for success rests entirely with students and that they need to acquire those skills that will allow them to succeed even when they encounter poor instructions.

Findings also shows that CGPA and CA and examination are the most favoured means of measuring students' success. This is in agreement with the findings of Tobih (2012) that the use of continuous assessment and examination is a good means of measuring student's success. Also Rich (2006) in one of his findings revealed that student performance can be determined by using examination and participation in class.

Results from the study shows that concentration of undergraduates is vital in the course of their studies and lack of reading habit and reading plan can adversely affect their academic success. This is in agreement with Fraser and Killen (2003) research where there exist a strong agreement between students and lecturers view of inadequate or poor examination preparation being the major factor affecting students' performance. This is understandable as poor examination preparation can be as a result of lack of concentration and lack of reading habit and reading plan on the part of the student. This also corroborates Benford and Gess-Newsome (2006) findings that student academic under-preparedness is one of the major factors responsible for students' failure in Northern Arizona University.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study set out to assess the factors affecting the performance of undergraduate students in construction related discipline in Nigeria with a view to understand some of the factors for success which may lead to innovative ways of providing a more successful academic atmosphere in the universities.

Thus far, the study has been able to explore the various method of measuring student success and various factors affecting student's performance. The study showed that parents and lecturers are of much relevance and can highly influence the performance of construction related undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study also revealed that concentration, lack of reading habit and reading plan and class size affects the performance of undergraduates. Interestingly, the study revealed that religion has no effect on the performance of construction related undergraduate students in Nigeria. It has also identified that student's Cumulative Grade Point Average and Continuous Assessment and Examination are the best means of measuring student success.

The study therefore recommends that parents and lecturers should be made aware of their roles in the success of their wards/students, while necessary facilities in term of accommodation on campus and serene environment should be provided for students by relevant authorities as this will enhance students' concentration, hence increasing the rate of students' success. Also a manageable size should be considered during admission into higher institutions, so as to maintain a reasonable lecturer/student ratio.

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