

Antecedent Factors Affecting Academic Performance of Graduate Students at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology

Rosemary Wahu Mbogo

Lecturer, Education Department; and Dean of the School of Education, Arts and Social Sciences (SEAS), Africa International University, P.O. Box 24686 – 00502 Karen, Nairobi

Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a Master's level thesis work that was done in 1997 to assess the antecedent factors affecting the academic performance of graduate students at the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (N.E.G.S.T.), which is currently Africa International University (AIU). The paper reviews the effect of lack of finance on academic performance; the effect of age on academic performance; the effect of language proficiency on academic performance; the effect of family responsibilities on academic performance; the effect of academic aspirations on academic performance; and the effect of student-faculty interactions on academic performance. The study targeted twenty-seven graduate students at the seminary. These respondents were sampled purposively. Data were collected through the use of a semi-structured questionnaire. The items in the questionnaire were developed using a five-point Likert scale. Open ended questions were coded and analyzed thematically. A Chi square correlation analysis was computed to establish the relationship between study variables. -Teacher friendly interactions, inspiration for further studies, family responsibilities, language proficiency age and lack of finance were some of the factors identified to be affecting academic performance of students. The paper recommends that time management, regulation of work load and commitment to seeking academic mentorship, are significant components that students need to embrace to enhance their academic performance. As a lecturer a lecturer in the institution, the author observes the practical relevance of the findings despite many changes in the institution. Recommendation is given to conduct more replication studies to investigate factors affecting AIU's students' academic performance in relation to current changes such as cultural, academic and numerical.

Keywords: Excellence, student academic performance, academic goals, education

1. Introduction

It is a fact that no one plans to fail, but still, the lack of good planning can lead to failure. It is a goal of Africa International University to attain academic excellence. Excellence involves discipline and tenacity of purpose (Gardner, 1961, p. 92). As Herbert Zimiles notes, "If we are to do justice to individual differences, if we are to provide suitable education for each person who comes into our colleges and universities, then we must cultivate diversity in our larger educational system to correspond to the diversity of the clientele" (Zimiles, 1961, p.83).

Nairobi Evangelical Graduate school of Theology (N.E.G.S.T.), now one of the three Schools of Africa International University, began in October 1983 with four students. It was out of the concern to train pastors beyond the certificate and diploma level. At the time of the study, N.E.G.S.T. required that those admitted to the school be accompanied by their family (spouses and/or children). This was done in order to train both spouses for the work of ministry. The college therefore offered Christian Ministries Programme to the wives of graduate students. The primary purpose was "to provide graduate training for leaders and missionaries for and from the church in Anglophone Africa, from other parts of Africa and elsewhere" (N.E.G.S.T. prospectus 1996-97).

The institution had been granted provisional registration as a private university with the Government of Kenya and was seeking full accreditation with both the commission for Higher Education and the Accelerating Council for Theological Education in Africa (A.C.T.E.A.) (N.E.G.S.T. Prospectus 1997-8).

Paul Bowers, writing on accreditation as a catalyst for renewal in theological education points out that there are three ingredients of accreditation. These are quality, credibility, and collaboration. On credibility, he says:

Theological schools feel themselves increasingly gripped by a need to secure recognition, from within society at large and especially from within the academic market place, in order to facilitate admission of their graduates to advanced studies, proper job placement, local financial and moral support, and open doors for ministry and proclamation (Bowers, 1982, pp. 27-29).

Therefore, it can be inferred from the above information that students, institution and the society at large aspire for academic excellence and hence the need for accreditation. In such pursuits, it is necessary to assess student's academic performance for the purpose of program improvement, student retention and satisfaction.

1.1 Background Information

Felicia Adeniji carried out a research to find out the factors that had contributed to the over-stay of students of Masters of Theology, in completing their programme of study. From records, she illustrated that out of thirteen students who had graduated; twelve had not graduated at the expected time. Some had taken three additional years to meet all requirements for graduation. Only one student had completed on time. The information gathered was summarized as shown in the following table.

Table 1: Time taken by student to complete their M.Th. Programme

Time in months	Number of students
10	1
18	2
22	2
24	3
34	1
36	1
47	1
48	1
58	1
60	1

Given that the stipulated duration for the students before graduation was sixteen months, from Table 1 it is clear that only one student had graduated, while thirteen were still waiting to graduate. These show a variation in students' performance. It took some students more time to acquire a certain level of academic performance while others took less time. Student's performance can be further demonstrated by grade point averages for students who have already graduated from Africa International University. Table 2 shows the Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) of students since 1992 to 1996. Most of the graduates of N.E.G.S.T. were concentrated within this time span.

Table 2: Students G.P.A.

GPA (Year)	3.5 - 4.0	3.4 - 3.0	Below 3.0
1992	1 (6.7%)	10 (66.7%)	4 (26.7%)
1993	8 (38.7%)	9 (42.9%)	4 (19%)
1994	6 (35.2%)	7 (41.2%)	4 (23.5%)
1995	3 (21.4%)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)
1996	6 (23.1%)	17 (65.4%)	3 (11.5%)

These differences in performance among students may be attributed to various factors including; personality differences, group intelligent differences, as well as diverse environmental causes.

1.2 Lack of Finance and Students' Academic Performance

"Most programs conducted by universities extension division are partially or wholly self-supporting by fees from participants" (Smith et al., 1970, p. 505). As pointed out, tuition fee is the main source of income for most academic institutions. During the last few decades, many institutions relied on donations from overseas. This is further illustrated by a case study conducted among Lutheran academic institutions in the United States of America by Charles Schlimpert. He stated that financial support for building the Lutheran academic institutions in the 1950's exceeded the expenses to be met, but this has changed as the twentieth century entered its final quarter (Schlimpert, 1995, p.18). Today the demand for scholarship funding is higher than the available resources. Students make effort to raise enough finance to support themselves during the period of study. Where possible they even take loans (Galloway & Hartle, 1995, p. 74).

The findings of the research carried out by Adeniji to investigate factors that caused overstay of Masters of Theology students at Africa International University in their programme of study, led to the rejection the

hypothesis which stated that, “lack of finance is a contribution to the overstay of M.Th. students”. This was partially moderated by the ranking of students of this factor as a contribution to their over-stay, and also because the faculty did not perceive that factor to have contributed to the over-stay of the students in their M.Th. Programme of study. However, Six out of thirteen students indicated that the factor contributed either to a very large extent or to a large extent to student overstay. Moreover, she did not carry out a statistical test of significance (Adeniji, 1997/8), and the rate of inflation is similarly higher. The population studied was also too small to represent the whole of the student body. Due to these reasons, in this study, lack of finance was considered as a factor that may negatively affect academic performance.

1.3 Age and Students’ Academic Performance

Our physical state affects our capacity to learn. Physique and intelligence are related because our bodies influence how and whether we can learn (Draves, 1984, p. 9).

William Draves shows how problems related to aging affect learning. He correlated intelligence with physical wellbeing. Lefrancois presented various research findings to show how intelligence is correlated with age. Some were of the view that intelligence declines with age yet others were not. He concluded that most intellectual functions decline with age (Lefrancois, 1983, p. 374). He further stated that older students seem not to perform well in timed tasks due to extra caution taken not to make mistakes as compared to their younger counterparts (Lefrancois, 1983, p. 374).

Other factors related to age would be other diverse responsibilities for example, business that one would be involved in alongside studies. This implies extra workload which may affect academic performance.

1.4 Language Proficiency and Students’ Academic Performance

“Research suggests that we must work toward short term goal of language proficiency with the intermediate goal of autonomy clearly in mind” (Pederson, 1995, p. 14). Skill in language of instruction is a basic necessity for students in all learning institutions. Learning can only take place where there is effective communication.

A descriptive study was carried out in the United States of America to find out the relationship between performances of students when taught by native teachers in America. The study revealed that there were language related complaints believed to create a major interference that may have hindered students learning process. More so, the understanding of the subject matter was negatively affected by the accent of the foreign teaching assistants (Jacob & Charles, 1988, p. 552-3). Although, the study was carried out in United States of America, similar outcomes may be observed in Africa. These may be due to problems related to lack of proficiency in English among students. Students therefore, fail to grasp the instruction given. Also, most instruction in institutions of higher learning is given through lectures. If students have difficulties in the language of instruction, they cannot take full notes helpful for good academic performance.

Eugene Ballagher conducted a research to find out an institutional response to difficulties of students in the language instruction, in Arab medical college. He also interviewed the students Language Difficulties Committee (S.L.D.C.) which had been created due to academic deans recognition of the poor academic performance of many students, and the belief that there were in the weakness of English. He discovered that the numbers of the committee did not agree on whether the academic failure is due to language difficulties. They had therefore paid attention to other matters and had neglected the language difficulty among students without carrying out any research. Since they did not carry out a research language, language difficulties among students remained rampant. Thus, students’ academic performance did not improve (Ballagher, 1989, pp. 565-582).

A study of English proficiency was conducted to include, course patterns and academic achievement of limited English proficiency community college students. The findings revealed that students with limited proficiency in English (where English was a student’s second language), did not differ from the general student population in academic achievement. It also revealed that the persistence of the students was negatively affected for students with a limited proficiency in English (Best, 1994, p. 11). However, this finding could be different when dealing with students whose English as a language of instruction is their third, fourth, fifth or even sixth to be learnt. In this study, it is held that language proficiency may affect academic performance. Difficulties in understanding instruction can arise from poor vocabulary (Maddox, 1963, p. 73).

1.5 Family Responsibilities and Students' Academic Performance

Graduate schools are characterized by students who are both young adults and middle age adults (20 - 45years). These students have different family responsibilities, which may affect their academic performance due to demand of time and attention. For example if one gets married and parent while enrolled in graduate school, it could influence the degree of progress in studies. The impact is expected to affect men and women differently and to directly affect their programme of study (Girves &Wammerus, 1988, p. 169),

1.6 Educational Aspirations and Academic Performance

“It is true that students who expect to continue their education have higher gained scores on intelligence experiences, than the students who do not plan to continue their education” (Pace, 1986, p. 289). When one has a goal, there is the tendency for one to work hard in order to achieve it. This, in turn, keeps one motivated and more effort is put in contrast with the person who does not have a goal. A study carried out among the students and lecturers to find out what they considered to be factors influencing students performance, revealed that both students and lecturers considered insufficient student effort as the factor most likely to contribute to academic failure (Killen, 1994). Lack of effort may be related to lack of a goal for further studies. This means that the students may fail to know the academic qualifications (including G.P.A.) needed for admission for further studies. An investigation done at the university by giving mental tests on entry to the students and comparing their test scores with subsequent examination scores revealed that: nearly half of the under achievers had weak and un satisfactory motives, whereas most of the over achievers had definite vocational goal or strong intellectual interest in their courses. Thus, the lack of adequate motivation is cause of academic failure (Maddox, 1963, pp. 18-19).

In many cases students do not have clearly defined goal for further studies. Shoemaker observes that in recent decades, the church has discovered the reformation emphasis upon priesthood of all believers, promoting the vital theme everyone is a minister. Regretfully, there has not been an equal emphasis upon the need for professional ministers as shepherds and teachers of the flock (Shoemaker, 1992, p. 106).

1.7 Student-Teacher Interactions and Students' Academic Performance

Christian higher education institutions assume that student-faculty informal interaction naturally occurs because of the fraternal nature of our faith. In reality, perhaps it does not, to the degree we assume. A more deliberate course of action that intentionally seeks to impact student lives is more effective (Lamport, 1988, p. 18).

According to Mark Lamport, student-teacher informal interaction can impact students' lives. This can be a method of motivating students. While his challenge is to challenge teachers to enhance informal interactions with students, Steven Stratton indicates that it should be done both by the students and the teachers. This requires purposeful time on the part of both the teachers and the students (Stratton & James, 1993, p.101). There is need for healthy interactions between students and teachers. This is because learning is not only an academic exercise but also a relational issue. Studies have revealed that there are both field dependent and field independent learning styles for all human beings (Hanson & Silver, 1986, p. 3). Since both categories are involved in the learning process, effort must be made to fulfill both. For field dependent students a regular interaction with the teacher is quit beneficial. Quality of interactions is an important factor that Lamport observes. It is possible to have high level of informal interactions that may not affect academic performance significantly. Intentional quality student-teacher interactions will positively influence academic performance.

Materials and Methods

The study employed use of questionnaire guide for data collection. This consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended items. The closed-ended items were used to gather quantitative data. The open ended items which probed for source were used together gather qualitative data. A pilot test was carried out among a selected number of students to test the clarity of the items. The population of this study consisted of continuing graduate students, that is, those who had been students from at least one full term. This is because grade point averages for every student were needed by the researcher. Continuing students comprised of a total of thirty full time students. There were twenty-six males and four females. All the female students were married but two of the male students were not. All the married students lived with their spouses and children. The population consisted of students from different regions and of different nationalities; from Anglophone and francophone Africa, Britain, United States of America and Asia. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Qualitative data

were coded and analyzed in emerging themes. A chi square correlation analysis using SPSS v 20 has been used to establish the relationship between the study variables.

2. Results and Discussion

3.1 Influence of Lack of Finance on Students' Academic Performance

The study sought to establish the influence of lack of finance on students' academic performance in AIU. To do this, an investigation into the way students were financing their education was delved into (whether on full scholarship, partial scholarship or none).

Table 3: Student's organizations

	Church organization	Para-church organization.	No organization.
Percentage	70%	11%	19%

Eighty one percent of the students had been sent either by church or Para-church organizations to study at Africa International University.

Table 4(a): Sender's financial support

	Frequency	Percentage
Full scholarship	7	26%
Partial scholarship	8	30%
No scholarship	9	33%
Not sure	3	11%
Total	27	100%

As shown in Table 4 (a), at least sixty-three percent of the students only had partial or no scholarship, and therefore lacked financial support. Table 4 (b) shows the responses of students on the extent to which the lack of finance affected their academic performance.

Table 4 (b): the effect of lack of finance on academic performance

Extent of influence	Very great ext.	Great ext.	Small ext.	Very small ext.	Not at all	Total
Frequency	5	10	6	2	4	27

A total of 15 (55%) indicated that lack of finance affected academic performance to a very great extent or a great extent, 8 (30%) indicated that they were affected to a small extent or very small extent, while, 4(15%) indicated that they were not affected at all.

Table 4c presents the extent of the effect of lack of finance on academic performance on second year and third year students.

Table 4 (c): Effect of Lack of Finance on Academic Performance

VARIABLE	Very great extent	great extent	Small extent	Very small extent	Not at all	Total
Second Year Students	5	6	4	2	4	21
Third Year Students	—	4	2	—	—	6
Total	5	10	6	2	4	27

A Chi-square correlation analysis was computed to establish the correlation between lack of finance and students' academic performance in Africa International University. Table 4d presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 4 d: Correlation between lack of finance and students' academic performance

Correlations		Lack of Finance	Academic performance
Lack of Finance	Chi-square Correlation	1.000	.789
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	27	27
Academic Performance	Chi square Correlation	.789	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	27	27

A strong correlation that was significant was found $\chi^2(2, N=27) = .789, p = .000$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. Therefore, lack of finance was found to have a significant influence on student academic performance.

3.2 Influence of Language Proficiency on Students' Academic Performance

The study also sought to determine the influence of language proficiency on students' academic performance. To do this, respondents were asked to indicate where they first learnt English language. This information is presented in Table 5a.

Table 5 (a): Mastery of English Language

Place	Frequency	Percentage
Home	2	7.4
Kindergarten	3	11.1
Primary school	6	22.2
Secondary	9	33.3
Post-secondary	7	25.9
Total	27	100.0

The respondents were then asked to indicate their views on the extent to which their mastery of English language affected their academic performance. Table 5b illustrates a summary of the finding.

Table 5 (b): Extent of effect of mastery of English language on performance

Extent of influence	Very great Ext.	Great extent	Small extent	Very Small extent	Not at all	Total
Frequency	1	5	10	2	9	27

Results indicate that 6 (22%) of the respondents indicated that they were affected to a very great extent or a great extent. Further, 12 (44%) affirmed were affected to a small or very small extent. Finally, 9 (33%) felt they were not affected at all.

Table 5 (c): Effect of lack of English language proficiency on student's academic performance

Variables	Very Great extent	Great extent	Small extent	Very small extent	Not at all	TOTAL
Second year students	1	5	7	1	7	21
Third year students	—	—	3	1	2	6
TOTAL	1	5	10	2	9	27

To establish the nature of relationship between English language proficiency and academic performance, a Chi square correlation analysis was computed. Table 5c presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 5c: Correlation between English language proficiency and academic performance

Correlations		Language proficiency	Academic performance
Language proficiency	Chi-square	1.000	.815
	Correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	27	27
Academic performance	Chi square	.815	1.000
	Correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	27	27

A strong correlation that was significant was found $\chi^2(2, N=27) = .815, p = .000$. Therefore, it was deduced that English language proficiency significantly affects students' academic performance in AIU. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

3.3 Influence of Family Responsibilities on Students' Academic Performance

Table 6a presents students' responses on the extent to which they thought family responsibilities influenced their academic performance.

Table 6 (a): Extent of effect of family responsibilities on academic performance

Opinion	Very great extent	Great extent	Small extent	Very small extent	Not at all	Total
Frequency	3	8	7	5	4	27

From the table 6 (a), 11(41%) indicated that family responsibilities affected their academic performance negatively to a very great or great extent, a 12 (44%) indicated that they were affected to a small or very small extent. Finally, 4 (15%) indicated that they were not affected at all.

To establish the nature of correlation between family responsibilities and students' academic performance, a Chi square correlation analysis was computed. Table 6b presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 6b: Correlation between family responsibilities and students' academic performance

Correlations		Family responsibilities	Academic performance
Family responsibilities	Chi-square Correlation	1.000	.716
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	27	27
Academic performance	Chi-square Correlation	.716	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	27	27

A strong correlation that was significant was found $\chi^2 (2, N=27) = .716, p < .05$. This implied that family responsibilities significantly influence students' academic performance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

3.4 Influence of Academic Aspirations on Academic Performance

In an attempt to establish the influence of academic aspirations on academic performance, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had a goal for furthering studies. Sixteen (59%) students were affirmative, five (19%) were not sure, while six (22%) pointed out that they did not have a goal for furthering their studies. When asked whether they aimed to achieve the required G.P.A. for further studies, twenty-five (93%) indicated that they did.

The results on table 7 (a) shows students cumulative G.P.A by the end of 1996/97 academic year. Four students declined to reveal their G.P.A saying that it was a private matter. Since this number only constituted sixteen percent of the population, it was not considered to have negatively affected the findings of the study in significant way.

Table 7 (a): Students cumulative G.P.A

G.P.A	Frequency
Above	3
3.0-3.4	12
2.5-2.9	7
2.0-2.4	1
Below 2.0	–
Total	23

N=23

Of the eight students whose G.P.A. was less than 3.0 six indicated that they had a goal for further studies. Table 7 (b) illustrates students view on what extent they thought the goal for further studies affected their academic performance.

Table 7 (b): Extent of effect academic aspirations on academic performance

Response	Very great Ext.	Great Ext.	Small Ext.	Very small Ext.	Not at All	Total
Frequency	6	14	1	-	6	27

N = 27.

Table 7 (b) 20 (74%) indicated that setting a goal for further studies positively affected their academic performance to a very great or great extent, 56 (59%) indicated that it affected them to a great extent, while 1 (4%) indicated that it affected him to a small extent. Further, 6 (22%) indicated that they were not affected at all.

A test was performed to test the related hypothesis on Second year and Third year students. The test results are shown in table 7 (c).

Table 7 (c): Effects of academic aspirations on academic performance

Scale of extent	Very great Ext.	Great Ext.	Small Ext.	Very small Ext.	Not at All	Total
Second year students	4	12	-	-	5	21
Third year students	2	2	1	-	1	6
Total	6	14	1	-	6	27

A chi square test of independence was calculated to establish the relationship between academic aspirations and academic performance of students. A significant relationship was found $\chi^2(2, N=27) = .714, p = .000$. There is therefore a significant relationship between academic aspirations and academic performance. The null hypothesis was rejected. Table 7d presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 7d: Chi-Square Test of Independence between academic aspirations and academic performance

	Value	df	asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Chi-Square	55.22 ^a	26	.017
Likelihood Ratio	51.30	26	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.016	1	.016
N of Valid Cases	27		

a. 27 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Influence of Lecturer-Student Interactions on Students Academic Performance

Respondents were asked to indicate the nature of their relations with their lecturers in order to establish the influence of these interactions on their academic performance.

Table 8 (a) presents a summary of the findings on this attribute.

Table 8 (a): nature of lecturer-student interactions

Scale	Very good	Good	Average	Weak	Very weak	Total
Frequency	5	14	9	1	—	27

N=27

Table 8 (a) shows that 19 (70%) of the respondents indicated that their friendly interactions with their teachers were very good or good, 9 (33%) of the respondents indicated that friendly interactions were average. Further, 1 (4%) of the respondents indicated weak interactions with teachers. This shows that seventy-seven percent of the responses indicated interactions above average.

Further, in order to buttress findings on the correlation between lecturer-student interactions and academic performance of students, the frequency with which students consulted their lecturers was sought. A five point likert scale was used to solicit responses from students as illustrated in Table 8b.

Table 8(b): Frequency of student-lecturer consultations

Response	Very often	Often	Average	Very rarely	Not at all	Total
	—	8	13	4	—	25

Findings indicated that 8 (30%) indicated that they regularly consulted their teachers for academic assistance, 13 (48%) averagely consulted their teachers while 4 (15%) indicated they consulted their teachers very rarely.

The responses of students were tabulated as shown in Table 8 (c).

Table 8 (c): Rate at which students consult teachers for academic assistance

Variable	Very often	often	Average	Very rarely	Not at all	Total
Second year students	6	11	4	—	—	21
Third Year Students	2	2	2	—	—	6
Total	8	13	6	—	—	27

A chi square test of independence was calculated to establish the influence of student-lecturer interactions and academic performance of postgraduate students in Theology. A significant relationship was found $\chi^2(2, N=27) = .609, p = .000$. The null hypothesis was rejected. There is therefore a significant influence of student-lecturer interactions and students' academic performance. Table 8d summarizes the analysis.

Table 8d: Chi-Square Test of Independence between student-lecturer interactions and students' academic performance

	Value	df	asyp. Sig. (2-sided)
Chi-Square	45.378 ^a	26	.015
Likelihood Ratio	41.242	26	1.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.002	1	.006
N of Valid Cases	27		

a. 27 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

3.6 Other factors affecting academic performance

Students were asked to indicate other factors, which were not among the variables that affected their academic performance. They indicated the following factors as shown in tables 9 and 10 below.

Table 9: below illustrates other factors positively affecting academic performance as indicated by students.

Table 9: Other factors positively affecting academic performance

Factor	Frequency
Interest in subject	2
Experience in writing	1
Stimulation in ministry	1

Two students pointed out that interest in each subject positively affected their academic performance. Experience in writing and stimulation in ministry were other factors thought to have affected academic performance.

Table 10 below illustrates other factors negatively affecting academic performance as indicated by students

Table 10: Other factors negatively affecting academic performance

Factor	Frequency
Work overload in some courses	11
Commitments outside the school	4
Poor time management	2
Discontentment with the program of study	2

Most students complained that work overload in some courses negatively affected their academic performance, other engagement outside the school and poor time management were thought to have negatively affected their academic performance.

To establish the perception of the necessary elements in improving performance, the following suggestions were indicated by students:

Table 11: Suggestions on how to improve academic performance

Factor	Frequency
Proper time management by students	22
Reduction of workload in some courses	11
More effort in study	9
Strengthened mentorship	8
Full scholarship	5
Revised program of study	3

As table 11 above shows, twenty-two students thought that needed to have proper time management to improve their academic performance. The following suggestions were given by students as ways in which the school could participate to assist them manage time properly: better medical facilities, helping with transport for shopping, and training in English languages.

Eleven students pointed out that work overload in some courses affected their academic performance negatively. Table 10 above shows that students are of the view that the reduced workload in some courses would help some students improve their academic performance. Nine were of the view that more effort in study would improve their academic performance. Five students felt that if they obtained a full scholarship they would do better academically. Finally, three students thought that if their program of study was revised, they would be motivated and hence better academic performance.

Conclusions

- a) The majority of graduate students at N.E.G.S.T. have been sent by churches. However, most of these churches are either giving partial financial support or no financial support to the students. This necessitates students' effort to raise the deficit funding.
- b) Most students at Africa International University learnt English language after primary school, either in the high school or university.
- c) Majority of the students are below forty-five years. Hence they are in their middle adulthood (35-45). They generally do not feel that age affects their academic performance negatively since they are intrinsically motivated to learn.
- d) The financial implications of maintaining a family creates anxiety among several students, especially when they are not able to meet their basic needs.
- e) Majority of the students plan to further their studies. They therefore target to attain a G.P.A that will enable them to do so. However, some students seem unaware of the G.P.A required for further studies.
- f) Student's interaction with the faculty is relatively good. However students rarely consult with their teachers for academic assistance.
- g) Both the students and the university should co-operate to help students improve their academic performance. Most students indicated that they needed to put more effort in their studies and to manage time properly.

Recommendations

- a) Regarding the lack of finance, the school may work in collaboration with students to have their churches support them financially. For the students who have not been sent by any organization, they could be advised on how to raise their own financial support before coming to Africa International University This will prevent financial frustrations during the course of study.
- b) In light of lack of English language proficiency among students, the school may offer an English grammar course for those who would need to improve their writing and their reading skills. This would, in turn, improve students' academic performance.
- c) Students should be able to plan their time wisely, in order to balance their academic work, family responsibilities and leisure. The school could help by planning various seminars where pertinent topics can be discussed.
- d) Students ought to use the relevant materials available at Africa International University library to know about available schools for further studies and their academic requirements. This will help students to work towards a specific goal, and to work hard to raise their G.P.A.'s.
- e) Since student-teacher friendly interaction is good, students should make attempt to consult with their teacher often for academic assistance. This will improve their performance on the various individual courses. Teachers should also express their availability to help students academically and more so for the part-time teachers.
- f) The school should also consider the complaints of the students about workload on some courses and take necessary steps. One way would be to have workshops that train students about speed reading and about time management.

Limitations

Due to the scope of the subject, this study was limited to the following factors that might have affected the academic performance of graduate students at N.E.G.S.T., among them; finances, student's age, language

proficiency, family responsibilities, academic aspirations, and student-faculty interactions. The author also limited the study only to the continuing students in 1997/98 academic year.

Recommended Areas of Further Research

- a) Since the ultimate goal of Africa International University is to train leaders for Africa and beyond, a research could be done to see the relationship between academic performance and ministry/leadership success among students and alumina.
- b) The study was limited to the continuing students in the year 1997/1998. A research could be taken to include other students and N.E.G.S.T alumni and faculty.
- c) The researcher considered the academic performance of continuing students in all courses in general. Since the students complained of work overload in some courses, a research could be carried out to look into factors that affect academic performance on individual courses.
- d) Since the institution has transition to be a full brown university in the last five years, with non-theological programs and diverse modes of delivery, ongoing studies could be to assess factors affecting student's academic performance in light of the changes.

References

- Adeniji, F. (1995). Overstay of Masters of Theology Students: Possible Factors and Recommendations. M.A thesis, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.
- Ballagher, E. B. (1989). Institutional responses to student difficulties with the language of instruction in an Arab medical college. *The Journal of Higher education*, 60(565-582).
- Best, T. (1994). English proficiency, course patterns, and academic achievements. *Higher Education Abstracts* 31, (1).
- Draves, W. A. (1984). How to teach adults Manhattan, Kansas: The Resources Networker.
- Galloway, F.J. & Hartle, T.W. (1995). Students borrowing: How much is too much? *Higher education Abstracts*, 31, (72).
- Girves, J. E., & Wemmerus, V. (1988). Developing models for graduate student degrees progress. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 59(March), 163-189.
- Gardner, John W. (1961). Excellence, can we be equal and excellent too. New York: Harper.
- Jacobs, L. C. & Friedman, C. B. (1988). Student achievement under foreign teaching associates compared with native teaching associates. *The journal of Higher Education*, 59(September), 551-563.
- Lamport, M. A. (1988). Student-faculty informal interaction and the effect of college student outcomes. *Journal Of Adult Training* 1(fall)15-19.
- Lefrancois, G. R. (1983). Psychology Belmont .California: Wadsworth.
- Maddox, H. (1963). How to study. New York: Ballantine.
- Pace, C. R. (1986). Achievement and the quality of student effort. In subtitle, (ed.) Tommy, M. T. & Herbert, J. W., *Academic Work and Educational Excellence.* , 285-296. Berkeley, California: McCutchan.
- Pederson, K. M. (1995). Humanizing feedback in the foreign language classroom: moving from technique to dynamic. *Journal of Christian Education* 38 (April) 5-32.
- Killen, R. (1994). Differences between students' and lecturers' perceptions of factors influencing students' academic success at university. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 13:19 9-212 .
- Schlimpert, C. E. (1995). Concordia University System. *Issues in Christian Education*, 29 (spring): 18-21.
- Shoemaker, M. (1992). Ministerial Education: Basics for renewal. *Faculty Dialogue*, 16 (winter): 95-114
- Smith, R.M., George, F. A., & Kidd, J. R. (1970). *Handbook of Adult Education*. New York: Michigan.
- Stratton, S. P., & Owens, J. R. (1993). Mentoring: Enhancing values development through international relationships. *Faculty Dialogue*, 19 (winter): 91-104.
- Zimiles, H. (1986). The changing American child .In subtitle, (ed.). Tommy, M. T. & Walberg, H. J. *Academic Work and Educational Excellence.* 61-64. Berkeley, California: McCutchan.