

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ON THE RATE OF STUDENT WITHDRAWAL IN
POLYTECHNIC**

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ABSTRACT

Despite increasing numbers of students embarking on tertiary studies in Nigeria, the proportion of students completing a qualification is low compared to other OECD countries and Ministry of Education data shows that completion rates are low for students at Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) compared to other tertiary organisations within Nigeria. This dissertation examines the reasons why students at a polytechnic stay on or withdraw from their courses. A qualitative methodology was employed for this research, focusing on a course with a low success rate at Unitec Nigeria. The primary sources of data were student pre- and post-course questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with three students. This research project found that polytechnic students face a number of issues including finances and the time and cost of having to commute daily to the institution. This research project also found that the youngest students had the highest risk of withdrawing from the course prior to its completion. Additionally, this research project found that the main factors that put ITP students at risk of not successfully completing their course could be identified prior to, and in the early stages of, their courses. These findings imply that early intervention by academic and support staff may lead to improved retention rates among this demographic of student. The interventions include: interviewing the students prior to the course to ensure they are aware of the costs involved in full-time study; having the students identify issues that may lead to having to withdraw and putting support in place to mitigate the effects of these issues; making a greater effort to socially and academically integrate the students and ensuring that students who struggle to pass early formative assessments are given extra support.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Education is an instrument for developing the nation. It is also an instrument for developing hidden talents in an individual. It is the only means of eliminating illiteracy in any society. The importance of education to the development of individual and the national cannot be over emphasized. It is a great investment any country can make for accelerating development of its technology, economic and human resources. Isife and Ogakwe (2012) explained that education is a powerful tool or weapon that can be used to eradicate ignorance, poverty, diseases and produce individual that can function effectively in the society. Onwuka (2012) pointed out that education is the instrument that is used to free people from incapacitation and exclusion. When an individual is freed from incapacitation and exclusion or illiteracy, there is usually a change in that person's behavior. This change influences the person's attitude and his whole life (Apebende, 2013). In a bid to achieve a paradigm shift in the country's educational system, The Federal Polytechnic Statue enacted Decree No. 33 of 1979 as amended by Decree No. 5 of 1993, to give legal basis for the establishment of Federal Polytechnics in Nigeria. The principal aim for the establishment of Polytechnics in Nigeria is to turnout the middle-level manpower needed for industrial and technological development of the country. No meaningful national development could be achieved by any nation without sound and qualitative technical education. No wonder, Prof. Uba Nwuba, one time Rector, Federal Polytechnic, Oko posited that the bedrock of technical emancipation for Nigeria is centred on Polytechnics education. Polytechnics offer highly

technical, scientific as well as research-oriented education to students. It is disheartening to observe today that these citadels of learning which were once cynosure of all eyes in developed economies of the world, has been relegated to the background in Nigeria. Nearly all the State-owned Polytechnics are just a little above the secondary school level, infrastructural wise, due to lack of adequate funding by successive administrations. Most Nigerian Polytechnics are synonymous with structural decay occasioned by neglect and misplaced priority on the part of the government on one hand and society on the other.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Drop out of school among polytechnic students means Basic technology students withdrawing from school before graduation due to some factors. Hornby (2000) explained drop out of school as a process whereby a person leaves school before he completes the study. He went further to define drop out of school as a situation by which a person rejects the ideas and way of behaving that are accepted by the rest of the society. United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2008) said that drop out of school is those who could not complete a particular level of schooling. Similarly, a school dropout is a learner who discontinues from school at any level of the educational process. The research seeks to investigate the statistical analysis on the rate of student withdrawal in polytechnic.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing numbers of students embarking on tertiary studies in Nigeria, the proportion of students completing a qualification is low compared to other OECD countries (Scott & Gini, 2010). Additionally, Ministry of Education (2010) data also shows that completion rates are low for students at Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) compared to other tertiary organisations within Nigeria. This is an issue for both students and tertiary institutions. Failing to complete a course of study has a personal and financial impact on students in that they have a debt burden without the increased earning ability to pay it off that comes from gaining the qualification. Also, tertiary institutions now face financial repercussions for failing to meet state-imposed success rate criteria (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014).

Within this author's area of tertiary education (introductory level electrical training at a polytechnic), in recent years over 50 percent of first year students either withdraw from the course or fail to satisfactorily complete the course. This compares with a national average of approximately 30 percent (Ministry of Education, 2010).

While there is a plethora of research on the subject of student success, most of it concerns degree level education at universities. There is however a dearth of research focusing on the perspective of polytechnic students. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the limited body of literature concerning the polytechnic students'

perspective regarding their ability to complete their courses. The aims of this study are to gain an in-depth and contextualised perspective of the issues surrounding students' decisions to remain on or leave their courses and highlight the factors leading to improved academic achievement rates amongst students from the same or similar demographic to those studied.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research is to gain an in-depth and contextualized perspective of the reasons polytechnic students stay on or withdraw from their courses.

Specifically, the study attempts to;

1. Examine the challenges facing Nigeria polytechnic trade students that may lead them to withdraw from their courses.
2. Examine the factors that assist Nigeria polytechnic trade students to remain on and pass their courses.

1.4 Research Question

Given the aims of this research it is important that the research question leads to ways of addressing polytechnic trade students' success rate.

3. What are the challenges facing Nigeria polytechnic trade students that may lead them to withdraw from their courses?
4. What are the factors that assist Nigeria polytechnic trade students to remain on and pass their courses?

1.5 Significance of study

The study shall proffer a framework of study for the formulation and implementation of policies towards mitigating the rate of students withdrawal in polytechnics. The context of this study is important as the students whose views are being canvassed have four principal things in common – they were male, they were on an entry-level electrical course at a particular polytechnic, they had to struggle with issues that made study difficult and they were able to persevere and pass the course. The choice of this research context was due to the researcher's day to day contact with and commitment to improving the educational outcomes of this demographic of student. A qualitative research methodology was chosen so that the focus was on the students' perspectives, seeking to understand why and how they persevered to complete their studies in Higher Education (HE).

1.6 Scope of Study

This is a small scale qualitative research study of one cohort of students on an entry-level electrical and electronics course at an urban polytechnic (Unitec) in Nigeria. The

course learning outcomes are at level two and three on the Nigeria Qualifications framework. To qualify as a level three qualification at least 30 credits of the qualification are required to be at level three (Nigeria Qualifications Authority, 2013). In this course the theory component of the first semester's papers are at level two while the majority of the second semester's theory is at level three. The majority of all practical papers are at level three. In all, fifty percent of the papers are at level three. The course is made up of eight one-semester long, fifteen-credit papers. However, within each paper there may be a number of modules that are assessed separately or may be assessed as part of a holistic assessment regimen. In general, each paper is assessed by at least a theory test, a written assignment and a practical assessment.

1.7 Organization of the study

Chapter One introduces the problem that was the impetus for this research and presents the context and rationale for this dissertation. The aims and research questions set the framework that guides this study.

Chapter Two draws on literature to critically examine the aims of this research. Issues surrounding the retention of students at tertiary level study and the success of students at both secondary and tertiary are considered.

Chapter Three provides the rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology and interview approach for this research, and the research design is discussed. The semi-structured interviews and the subsequent data analysis are explained. Issues of internal

validity, reliability and trustworthiness are described. Ethical considerations are identified and discussed.

Chapter Four presents the findings from the pre- and post-course questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Five uses the research questions to frame the discussion and integrates the findings from Chapter Four with the relevant literature. Chapter Five also reviews the research process and the main findings in this study, presents recommendations for practice and further research, and highlights the limitations of the study.

1.8 Definition of terms

SOCIAL CAPITAL DEFINED

Social capital, as defined by Coleman (1988), includes multiple concepts. Each of the included concepts produces a desirable outcome within a relationship among different people. Each person included in the relationship places value on the desired outcome. This value is the intangible resource that Coleman refers to as social capital.

DROPOUT DEFINED

Event dropout describes the student who has committed the mere act of leaving high school before graduating. Status dropout describes the person of school age who was not in school at the time of the survey. Cohort dropout uses a base year and describes a person who did not obtain a high school equivalency degree, high school Dropouts

diploma, or failed to attend school for 20 consecutive unexcused days during the base year in which the individual should have graduated.

Status dropout rate is used most often to describe the proportion of persons who have dropped out of school. Event dropout rate describes the percent of students who drop out of school in any particular year. Cohort dropout rates show the difference in dropout rates for particular groups of students. Due to the confusing nature of the definitions, states often report differing types of dropout percentages, leading to unreliable conclusions when comparing state dropout rates.

[GET THE COMPLETE CHAPTERS 1 TO 5](#)