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The relationship between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses

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Abstract

This research work employed a descriptive survey method of correlation type between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education in Kwara State College of Education (T.), Lafiagi. 120 students were randomly sampled from the graduating students of 2012/2013 academic session. Pro-forma was used to collect data. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient, T-test and Descriptive Statistic were statistical tools used. The findings revealed a strong correlation between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses (Agricultural science education and Economics education). It was also discovered that there was no significant difference between students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education. Based on gender analysis, vocational female students performed better in General English than their male counter-parts. Female students outperformed their males in Economics education but in Agricultural science education, the finding was at variance. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

1. Introduction

[9] dispelled that English language is very crucial to the Nigeria's educational system. [14] averred that its position is such a ubiquitous one that almost every human pursuit beyond the self requires of the use of English in a sense. [4] opined that it is through the vehicle of English language that student accessed knowledge in other subject areas. To this effect, proficiency in English language is essential not only for academic success alone but to perform in life as various individuals. The knowledge is important both for educational, economical and national development of a country. The importance of English language as a school subject derives mainly from its utilitarian value to the larger Nigerian society.

The correlation between students' academic performance in General English and predictive academic performance of students in other disciplines cannot be over

stated based on the influence English language has on other disciplines and subjects. [1] revealed that lack of proficiency in English language is contributing to poor performance in Mathematics. He observed that the performance of students in Mathematics' examination at Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) is poor. This he linked to poor reading ability in English language. He suggests that there is need to improve the teaching of English language to improve Mathematics' education.

[5] in their research on students' proficiency in English language relationship with academic performance in science and technical education concluded that proficiency in English language is strongly related to students' academic performance in science and technical education. [18] in Momoh-Olle (1998) revealed a cogent statistical relationship between students' entry qualification in English language and vocational studies. This is an indication that where the proficiency in English is lacking in any academic setting, it will definitely lower the academic Performance of the students.

Gender analysis of students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses is an issue to underscore in this dispensation. This is because the difference in academic interest and performance due to gender is a crucial matter to educationists. Yet, sex factor is an area of educational research that has generated interesting findings based on compendious research.

That aside, the components of vocational education include Agricultural education, Business education, Industrial technical education, Home economics education, Computer education and Economics education. However, this research work will only focus on the correlation between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses in relation to Agricultural science education and Economics education alone with the view that the beneficiaries of vocation education are expected to awaken the latent resources in them to promote personal and national economic growth[15].

1.1. The Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education referred to the education which involves the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of the economics and social life[22]. [3] affirmed that Vocational education empowers trainees with life sustenance and employability skills to become productive and active participant in the task for socio-economic and political development and national unity. This corroborated with the argument of [2] that this goal serves as an incentive for thousands to become entrepreneurs. It encourages individuals, especially the unemployed ones to become creative and stop searching for jobs but rather enable them to start thinking on how to be self-employed.

1.2. Vocational Education as a Panacea for Unemployment in Nigeria

It is pertinent to note that education can be a means to an end. Vocational education can be a tool for securing employment and emancipation of people through the provision and acquisition of practical skills geared towards self-employability. One practical step that could aid the reduction of unemployment in Nigeria is to facilitate a well structured academic curriculum that is vocationally inclined at the secondary school level and at tertiary institutions.

Vocational education should be implemented in the Nigeria's educational system since it prepares people for the world of work. The Federal Government can avoid idle time in the lives of youths and the problem that go with it when young minds are equipped with practical skills and knowledge to earn a living. In a sense, vocational education leads to employment generation, growth of the economy and sustainable development.

The fast pace of development recorded in such nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, Brazil and India have clearly shown that development is driven by the innovativeness, creativity and vocational education. Vocational education is made distinct in the USA where it is aimed at preparing young people and adults for skilled trades and semi-professional careers [11]. Findings in Ghana of small scale enterprises revealed that young people owned almost 40 percent of the enterprises [23]. Similarly, research in South Africa unfolded that the probability of self-employment among young people rises with age [8].

Unfortunately, Nigeria has not been able to exhibit similar feats owing to poor linkage between knowledge and development. This is akin to lack of appropriate skills and insufficient vocational culture in the educational system of the country. The system also suffered from lack of adequate planning from the onset. There are shortage of personnel, infrastructure, facilities, and equipment [21]. The curriculum was also criticized for not being practical oriented [20].

[16] opined that vocational and technical education has assisted many countries from economic recession, unemployment and has enhanced their political and economic status.[25] averred that 75% of the youths in Germany go through vocational training before they go into employment thereafter. This should be instructive for Nigeria. It is on this note that this paper advocates for compulsory entrepreneurship and vocational education for all undergraduates irrespective of their course of study. This is because every course has some potential for business.

2. Research Methodology

This research work employed descriptive survey method where students' scores in General English along sides their scores in Agricultural science and Economics education, were collected and analyzed for the purpose of this study.

The sample population considered students from Kwara State College of Education (T.) Lafiagi.

2.1. Research Instrument

Pro-forma was used to collect students' scores from year 1 to 3. The instrument needs no validation since the result has gone for moderation under various distinctive higher institutions before being released.

2.2. Sample and Sampling Techniques

A total number of one hundred and twenty students were randomly sampled from the graduating students of 2012/2013 academic session. Out of those sampled in Agricultural science education, thirty-six were males while twenty-four were females. In Economics education, thirty-two were females and twenty-eight were males.

2.3. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study will only investigate the relationship between students' academic performance in General English and Vocational education courses in College of Education (T.) Lafiagi. The study focused on General English and Vocational education courses (Agricultural science and Economics education) as explained in the curriculum by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

2.4. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses (Agricultural science education and Economics education). The study will specifically determine;

1. The significant difference between students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education.
2. Students' academic performance based on gender in Agricultural science education.
3. Students' academic performance based on gender in Economics education.
4. Students' academic performance based on gender in General English.

2.5. Research Hypotheses

H₀₁. There is no significant correlation between students' academic performance in General English and Agricultural science education.

H₀₂. There is no significant correlation between students' academic performance in General English and Economics education.

H₀₃. There is no significant difference between students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education.

2.6. Research Questions

1. Is there any significant difference in the students'

academic performance based on gender in Agricultural science education?

2. Is there any significant difference in the students' academic performance of the males and the females in Economics education?
3. Is there any significant difference in the academic performance of the males and the females in General English?

3. Findings

Table 1. Correlation between General English and Agricultural science education

	General English	Agric. science edu.
General English	1	.768
N	60	60
Agric. Science Edu.	.768	1
N	60	60

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2. Correlation between General English and Economics education

	General English	Economics edu.
General English	1	.624
N	60	60
Economics Edu.	.624	1
N	60	60

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3. T-test performance of Agricultural science and Economics education students

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	t _{cal}	t _{tab}	Df	Decision
Agric. Edu	1.88333	13.26150	1.100	1.665	59	Not significant
Eco Edu						

Table 4. Mean scores of students' academic performance in Agricultural science education based on gender

Variables & Groups	Mean	Std. dev.	N
Males	42.000	13.4044	36
Females	42.400	13.6239	24

Table 5. Mean scores of students' academic performance in Economics education based on gender

Variables & Groups	Mean	Std. dev.	N
Males	33.5714	10.5950	28
Females	44.9062	10.9614	32

Table 6. Vocational students' academic performance in General English based on gender

Variables & Groups	Mean	Std. dev.	N
Males	33.8871	9.54730	62
Females	37.4483	9.39237	58

One possible inference that could be drawn from Table 1 is that, correlation coefficient is 0.768, significant at 0.05.

Critical value at $df = 59$ was 0.250, the calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis one is hereby rejected. From table 2 the correlation coefficient is 0.624, significant at 0.05. Critical value at $df = 59$ was 0.250, the calculated r was greater than table r ($r_{cal} > r_{tab}$) therefore the null hypothesis for research hypothesis two is hereby rejected. From table 3, it was deduced that no significant different in students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education using t -test.

Based on this analysis, there is significant relationship between students' academic performance in General English and Agricultural science education and Economics education, respectively. The implication is that students who performed well in General English will equally perform well in Agricultural science education and Economics education and students who failed in General English may not do well in both Agricultural science education and in Economics education. It was also discovered that there was no significant difference between students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education

On the basis of gender, there is no significant difference in the academic performance of the males and the females in Agricultural science education as obtainable in Table 4. However, Table 5 reveals that the females performed better in Economics education than their male counter-parts. Table 6 equally indicates that vocational female students performed better in General English than their male counter-parts.

4. Discussion of Findings

It could be inferred from the above findings in Table 1 and 2 that there was correlation between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses. The implication is that there is tendency for good academic performance in General English to incur better academic status for vocational education students in Agricultural science education and Economics education. Proficiency and good language competence in English language or General English is therefore required for all students in vocational education.

The findings of this research work therefore agreed with the finding of [12] who proved in his work that competency in English language significantly determines performances in academic test.[6] expressly opined that students' academic performance in English among College's students influence students' performance in Physics. The findings further confirmed the positions of [13] who articulated that a lack of adequate mastery of English language (language of instruction) and deficient language background is a major problems relating to inadequate understanding of the teacher's speech (listening problem) that results to poor vocabulary and syntactic knowledge (note-taking problem).

The result in Table 3 revealed that there was no significant difference between students' academic

performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education since the calculated value of t is greater than the table value ($t_{cal} > t_{tab}$). To this effect, research hypothesis 3 was rejected. The implication is that there is insignificant difference in the students' academic performance of both Agricultural science education and Economics education among College students.

It is very germane to revealed at this juncture that studies on gender have shown that gender factor has effect on students' academic performance. Gender analysis of this research work on vocational education students in General English revealed in Table 6 that the females outclass their males. This agreed with the findings of [7], [19] and [9] where the performance of girls in English language was significantly higher than that of boys. However, the findings of [17] was at variance with the above discussions since he revealed that the males outperformed the females in English language. This therefore affirmed that good performance in English language is not gender specific.

More also, gender analysis of students' academic performance in Economics education revealed that the females performed better in Economics education than their male counter-parts. However, there is no significant difference in the academic performance of the males and the females in Agricultural science education as obtainable in this research.

Finally, good language proficiency in General English could go a long way in influencing students' academic performance in vocational education studies since English language is not only the medium of instruction especially at the upper primary, secondary and tertiary level of education but also the language of text-books [24]. It is therefore importance to ensure that students who are admitted into vocational education courses have good English language proficiency.

5. Conclusions

There is a strong relationship between students' academic performance in General English and vocational education courses. The implication is that General English is a virile factor to be considered in relation to students' achievement in vocational education courses. The finding also revealed that there was no significant difference between students' academic performance in Agricultural science education and Economics education. Academic performance based on gender among vocational students revealed that the females outperformed their males in General English. Gender analysis of Agricultural science education students showed no significant difference but the finding was at variance among Economic education students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the previous findings:

1. Admission into any course in vocational education

should be based on credit pass in English language.

2. English language should be central to what students will learn in General Studies Education Department upon their admission into vocational education.
3. All students in secondary school should be counseled to take English language very seriously irrespective of the course they wish to study in the higher institution.
4. Entrepreneurship spirit should be the corner stone of vocational studies. Without entrepreneurship training even graduates of vocational and technical education will be part of the team of job seekers in the country.
5. The Federal Government should help the Nigeria teaming youths channel their energy towards a useful vocation that will make them useful to themselves and the society at large.

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