

FALLING STANDARD OF EDUCATION A CASE OF EKITI STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examined the position of the standard of Education in Ekiti State College of Education. Two periods of an interval of ten years, consisted of three academic sessions each, were used for the study-a period of 1999, 2000, 2001 and a period of 2009, 2010, 2011. The academic performance of students during the two periods were compared and analysed. The result of the findings showed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students between the two study periods taken together, and a significant difference between each study year of ten years interval. Based on the findings, it was discovered that lecturers, students societal ills, overloaded curriculum were the responsible factors. It was thus recommended that lecturers welfare, adequate fundings, provision of infrastructures, prompt payment of retired staff gratuities and review of overloaded curricula will go a longway at improving the standard of education in the study area and beyond.

Keywords: Falling; Standard of Education, Achievement, Performance

Introduction

In Nigeria today, hardly can a day or week passed without headlines or feature article on falling standard of education in the Newspapers. The sum total of the issues discussed had always been of the need for educational reforms that will be functional and in reality with the present socio-economic and political education in the country. The call for these reforms aroused since education is considered to be the instrument needed for our economic transformation and manpower empowerment of the nation.

In other words, education has been seen to be a vehicle for the development of a sustainable economy, acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental physical, social abilities and competencies. It is therefore highly imperative for this very important sector not only to be developed but to also be functional.

The issue of falling standard of education seems to be a generally relative terms often used at both the federal and states to describe the state of their education, especially when commissioning a new project. During or after such programmes, opinion are abound as to whether or not the standard of education has fallen. Indeed the arguments is of two sides. One is that the standard has fallen drastically as a result of factors militating against the school system in terms of fundings, political will staffing, environmental factors etc.

The other has a contrary view. The argument is that, it is not the standard that has fallen but that products from the school system. That is how the products can be measured in terms of outcome. Bello (2010) said that falling standard of Education is a relative term, because there is no well defined instrument to measure it with utmost reliability and validity. Hence, opinion varies.

For instance, Nigerian observer (2008) opined that, the issue of the quality of Education in Nigeria should be critically analysed before determining whether or not the standard is falling or has fallen.

Osuntokun (2012) also avowed that the decline in education is not the same as the decline in knowledge. Young people nowadays are more knowledgeable than their parents. The point is, before we can be emphatic on the issue of falling standard one must be comparing two laid down or expected standard. This argument was borned out of the fact that, the present crops of our school levels are more scientifically and technologically inclined than the past ones when standard was said to be higher. But then, what of those in the secondary school or undergraduates who cannot write or speak a simple correct English. An encounter of the researcher with a university graduate (corpers) who made nonsense of statement of defence he was asked to write when he committed an offence, later earned, the corper an extension of his service year. These are indeed abound and would indeed be sufficient to conclude that there is falling standard of Education in Nigeria.

The New International Websters Comprehensive Dictionary (2004) Defined Standard of educational system as a systematic and generally accepted level of teaching and learning in the educational institution geared towards improving knowledge and developing skills.

Drike (2003) Sees Standard of Education as to how education contributes to the public healthy or socio-political and economic development of a nation. Bello (2008) sees it from how university contributes to knowledge and solving problems besetting mankind. Babalola (2006) focussed on the concept of Standard of Education from the point of view of admission of Nigerian University products in developed countries universities.

Similar view was expressed by Gateway to the Nation (2013) who used spoken and written English as parameter for measuring standard of Education, in which University of London conducted a research on West Africa and the result showed that teachers trained by the colonial teachers were better than those trained by the indigenous teachers. In this case, standard is seen to mean the quality and characteristics of a particular activity either physical, spiritual or intellectual in the life of a person or a nation.

However, whichever way one is viewing standard of education in Nigeria, and for one to conclude, there should be certain parameters of measurement. How reliable is this measuring instruments? How valid?, How relevant and adequate? Are there homogenous in terms of time and space, and facilities are the teaching methods the same? Or very similar? What quality of teacher were on ground, what other environmental factors are been considered and what is the mode of assessment now and then. These are relevant questions that are needed for consideration between a value Judgement could be made as to the falling standard of Education in Nigeria.

Statement of Problems

Many opinion leaders, commentators, professionals and educationist are always in agreement as to the fact that there indeed there is a decline in standard of Education in Nigeria at least in comparative terms with when they were students or immediately after graduation. These views are indeed too worrisome and posed the greatest challenges to our educational sectors and much more to the teachers, lecturers and education officers. Many factors have in the past been considered as to reasons behind the falling standard, yet the status-quo seems to remain the same.

In view of this, the researcher opined for a "Centri-Paribus" stance approach (all things being equal) for these militating factors, to investigate the standard of education in Ekiti State College of Education. Hence, two hypotheses were Formulated.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2009, 2010, 2011 academic periods

Ho 2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999 and 2009, 2000 and 2010, 2001 and 2010 academic periods.

Methodology

This study is an expos-facto research design. It is expos-facto because, the published result of the graduated students were used in which no manipulation can be done.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The whole students of the College formed the population for the study, while two schools of study were used as sample. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the two schools out of five schools of study. The two schools are School of Education and School of Sciences. A total of 2216 students formed the subject sample.

The major instrument used, was the students published results for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2009, 2010 and 2011 academic year.

The data was analysed into fail list, lower pass, pass, merit, credit and distinction. Chi-square and percentage were used as statistical instruments.

Results and Discussion

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students between those graduated in the year 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2009, 2010, 2011.

Table 1. Year with No of Students

Grade	1999	2000	2001	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL	df	χ^2	P
Fail	1 (1.7)	10 (2.7)	15 (2.7)	107 (16.6)	6 (1.7)	13 (5.4)	152 (6.9)	25	437.440	<0.05
Lower Pass	4 (6.7)	42 (11.5)	68 (12.4)	173 (26.8)	80 (22.4)	64 (26.4)	431 (19.4)			
Pass	24 (40.0)	160 (44.0)	201 (47.6)	314 (48.7)	194 (54.3)	101 (41.7)	1054 (47.6)			
Merit	22 36.7	131 (36.0)	192 (35.0)	51 (7.4)	77 (21.6)	64 26.4	537 24.2			
Credit	7 11.7	19 5.2	12 2.2	-	-	-	38 (1.7)			
Distinction	2 3.3	2 0.5	-	-	-	-	4 (0.2)			
	60 (100)	364 (100)	545 (100)	645 (100)	357 (100)	242 (100)	2216 (100)			

P<0.05, Percentages are enclosed in parentheses

The null hypothesis is rejected ($\chi^2 = 437.440$, P<0.05). This implies that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2009, 2010, 2011.

The result of the findings showed that the calculated chi-square χ^2 437.440 was more than the table value of 37.652 at 25 degree of freedom. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significant. That is, there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2009, 2010, 2011.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999 and 2009, 2000 and 2011, 2001 and 2011 academic year.

Table 2

Grade	1999	2009	2000	2010	2001	2011
Fail	1 (1.7)	107 (16.6)	10 (2.7)	6 (1.7)	15 (2.7)	13 (5.4)
Lower Pass	4 (6.7)	173 (26.8)	42 (11.5)	80 (22.4)	68 (12.4)	64 (26.4)
Pass	24 (40.0)	314 (48.7)	160 (44.0)	194 (54.3)	261 (47.6)	101 (41.7)
Merit	22 (36.7)	51 (7.9)	131 (36.0)	77 (21.6)	192 (35.0)	64 (26.4)
Credits	7 (11.7)	-	19 (5.2)	-	12 (2.2)	-
Distinction	2 (3.3)	-	2 (0.5)	-	-	-
Df	5		5		4	
χ^2	158.323		51.058		33.479	
P	<0.05		<0.05		<0.05	

P<0.05, percentages are enclosed in parentheses

Table 2 shows that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999 and 2009 ($\chi^2 = 158.323$, df = 5, P<0.05); 2000 and 2010 ($\chi^2 = 51.058$, df = 5, P<0.05); 2001 and 2011 ($\chi^2 = 33.479$, df = 4, P<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

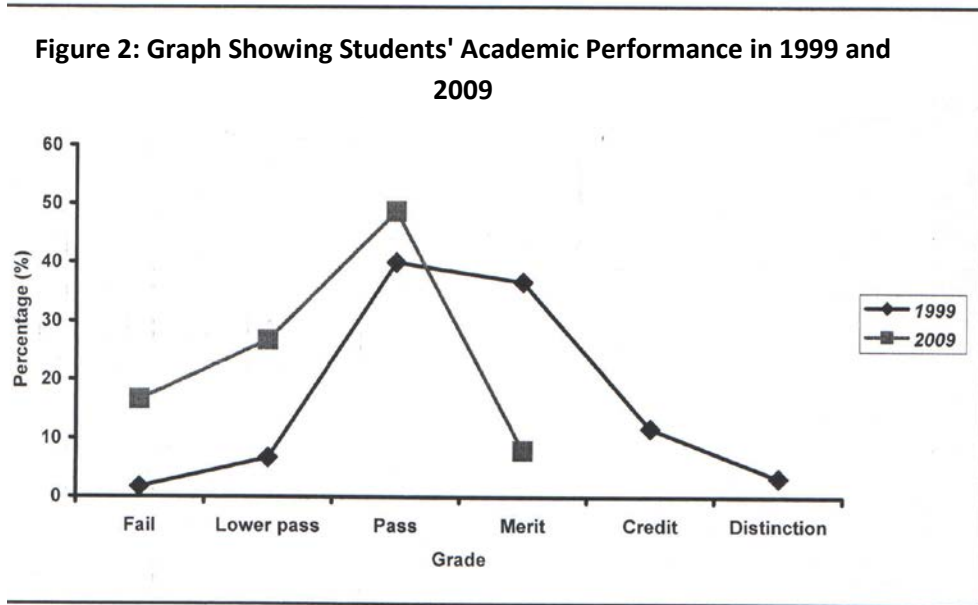
The result of the findings showed that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999 and 2009. The calculated chi-square (χ^2) value of 158.323 was more than the table value of 11.070. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significant.

The findings also showed that the calculated chi-square (χ^2) value of 51.058 was more than the table value of 11.070, with 5 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that the hypothesis is rejected. That is, there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students between 2000 and 2010.

The finding also revealed that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students between 2001 and 2011. The chi-square (χ^2) value of 33.479 was obtained which again is more than the table value of 9.488 at 0.05 level of significant. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

Result of the findings showed that in 1999, out of a total number of 60 graduated students, only 2 had distinction. Whereas ten year after, that is 2009, out of a total of 640 graduated students there was no distinction and no credit candidates. Also, in 2000, a total of 364 students graduated, 10 candidates failed representing 2.7%, with 2 students in Distinction grade. By 2010, a total of 357 candidates graduated, no student had Distinction and no credit. In 2001, 15 candidate failed, representing 2.7%, while in 2011, 242 graduated, 13 candidates failed representing 5.4%, there was no student in Credit and Distinction grades.

Figure 2:

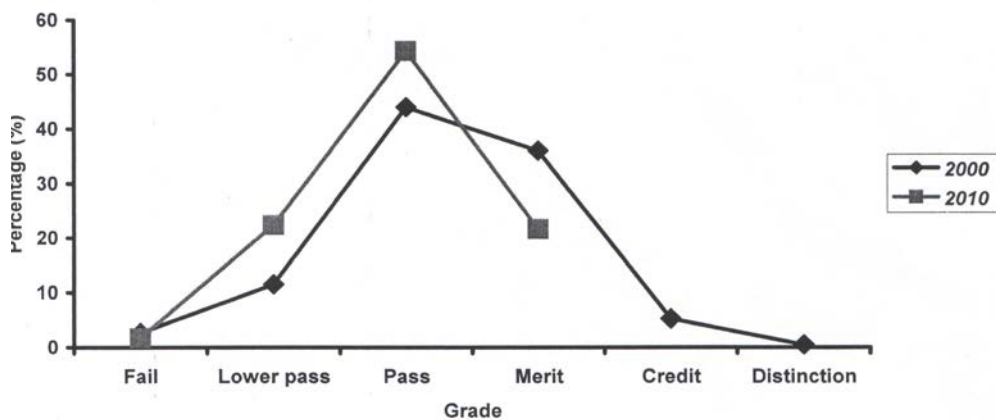


The figure showed a graphical view of the grades of students in 1999 and 2009. From the graph, students relatively performed better in 1999 than 2009. There was only one failed candidate with 2 distinctions some in credit, and merit. Whereas, in 2009, more candidates failed, many in lower pass and pass but none in credit and distinction grades.

This confirmed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students between 1999 and 2009.

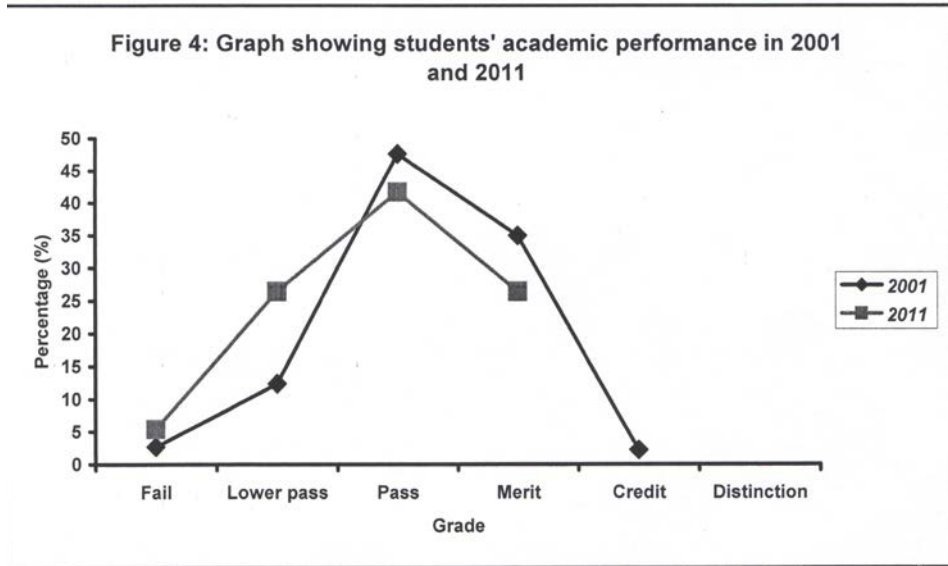
Figure 3

Figure 3: Graph showing students' academic performance in 2000 and 2010



The graph also showed that there was a better academic performance of students in 2000 than 2010. Like 1999, in 2000, more students passed with some in credit and distinction, which was not so in 2010, that is, ten years after.

Figure 4



In figure 4 students equally performed better in 2001 than 2011. That is, there was again a significant difference in the academic performance of students between 2001 and 2011.

Figure 5

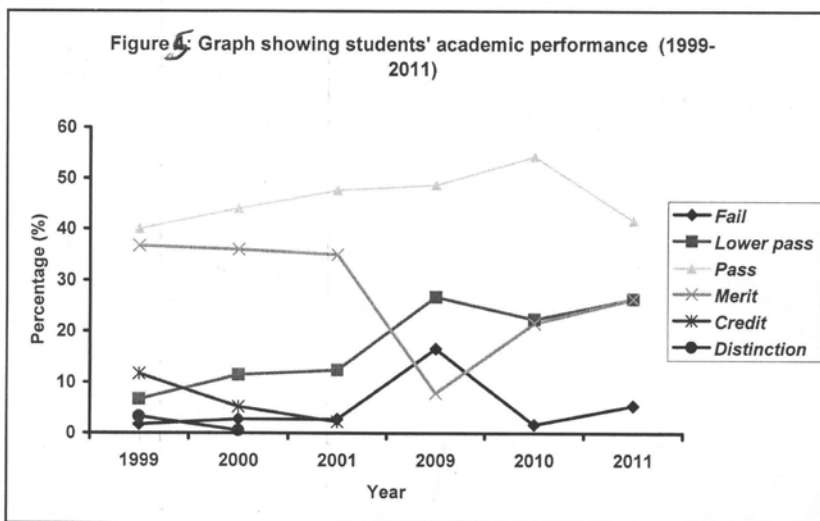


Figure 5 showed a comprehensive graphical view of the grades of students between the two periods under discussion. It showed how the graph of Lower Pass, Pass and Merit permeated through the six years. But the graph of Credit and Distinction only went through 1999 and 2000.

From the foregoing therefore, the standard of education is in reality falling. It needs reiterated that the study area remained homogenous in all ramification throughout the two periods under investigation. The same lecturers, the same facilities, the same working environment and other relevant factors were on ground during the two studied periods.

What then could be the major contributing factors for this sharp difference in the students' academic performance between the two periods?

Dantata (2013) attributed reasons for falling standard of education in Nigeria Universities and other tertiary institution to incessant strike by university staff, inadequate funding and youth non-challant attitude to the pursuit of knowledge. Most Nigeria tertiary Institution today are always on strike. Academic period can hardly be defined. Students admitted into a 3 or 4 year academic programme cannot say their exact time of graduation. Some institutions are presently in 2010/2011 academic session, some are in first semester of 2011/2012 academic session, all because of unabated strike activities

Babalola (2006) avowed that poor attendance of students at lectures and at other academic programme was too much. The Nigeria academic policy stipulated a 70% student attendance at lectures. How many students do meet up to this in a semester? Do Lecturers take class attendance regularly so as to checkmate students absenteeism. Do the attendance register used as part of their continuous assessment scores? Akintunde (2011) believed that non-dedication of teacher (Lecturers inclusive) constituted one major factor of falling standard of education in Nigeria.

Indeed, most of our lecturers today are no more committed to the course of improving the education sector. The non-challant and lukewarm attitude of our lecturers to work is too worrisome. Gone were the days when tutorial classes were organised for students. At tutorial class real students-lecturer interaction takes place. Where questions and answers are addressed and attended to. In this study area, factor of non-challance and lukewarm attitude are very prevalent. Most of the young lecturers are engaged in other business venture that can bring them money. Most of them are more devoted to this private business than their primary assignment.

Chinelo (2011), also opined that reasons adduced for the falling standard of education in Nigeria include decline in competence and commitment of teachers. Another striking reason for this sharp difference between the two investigated groups is students' poor reading culture. Today, over 70% of students at any level of our educational ladder do not know how

to read, whether for pleasure or for academic purpose. Reasons for this has been linked to distraction and wrong application of information and communication technology devices and high cost of books.

In the daily independent of 27th march, 2013, Akingbulu opined that, poor reading culture is attributed to the prices of books that are on the high side. He went further to say that our young generation sees the leaders pocketing so much money and they breeds the feeling that there is always a shortcut of making money. The impression been created here is that one does not really have to give oneself any drudgery or too much labour for one to get rich. A college librarian - Mrs. Bolanle Malomo in the daily independent of 27th March, 2013, said that, reading culture among all strata of Nigeria populace is *dwindling*. It was as a result of the concerned he had on this issue, that gave the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, to launch the "Bring back the book" campaign in May 1, 2011. The objective of that campaign was to re-awaken Nigerian especially the students and the youths generally on the importance of reading.

Another identified major cause of this sharp difference is too much courses offered by students. The new curricula released by the Nigeria Commission for Colleges of Education, NCCE, 2007 is so wide that students have little or no time to make inquiries or going to library.

For instance, in the Primary Education Studies department in all Colleges of Education in Nigeria and the like Departments in the faculty of Education in Nigerian Universities, no student offer less than fifteen (15) courses in a semester and not Less than 24 total credit Units. This is the same in almost all other Departments. Aside the courses are highly loaded. Aliva (2013) opined that overloading curriculum makes students over-burdened with school work and home task given by respective teachers. Overloaded curriculum especially that of Nigerian Colleges of Education was **borned** out of the fact that the intellectual subjects should be studied in order to broaden the knowledge of the students and make them relevant and knowledgeable in almost all areas.

This idea loadable as it is no doubt increases the load on a student mind and his overall development is adversely affected. Grame (2010) avowed that constant changes in the National Curriculum are overloading schools and promoting a "tick list" approach to teaching and learning. That is acute overload will only forced schools or teachers to rush through subjects and drill students to pass not minding whether or not real learning has taking place.

In the National council for curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2010), in the response of a teacher to the issue of overloaded curriculum was quoted as follows

"When I taught in the regular classroom, I felt like I was rushing the children through the curriculum, and to get through everything. I would have liked to have taught things in more depth. The curriculum as it is now is a mile wide and an in-deep"

The point is the overloaded curriculum has not achieved its expected objective rather; it had made almost nothing of the students. Many are so empty in all the courses and if not so wide, could have had better understanding of most of the courses- Jack of all trades master of none". Hence a falling standard of Education become highly imperative in this type of situation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study reflected on the academic performance of students as it affects standard of education in Ekiti State College of Education. It compared the final results of students during two academic periods each comprising of three academic sessions. The result of the findings showed that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of students between the two studied periods. This result gave an empirical evidence to say that there is a falling standard of Education in Ekiti State and Nigeria generally.

Reasons adduced for the continuous falling were attributed to lecturers' insentiveness to the plights of the students, their non-challant and inactiveness, students' poor reading cultures and societal influences, overloaded curriculum etc.

Based on the finding, it is hereby recommended that efforts should be made to improve the welfare of lecturers in terms of adequate fundings, provision of infrastructures, improved service delivery, prompt payment of salaries and gratuities which findings also showed to be in areas of 8-10 years (unpaid gratuities) in the study institution. All efforts should be made to encourage and improve students reading habit. Encourage note taken during lectures. Students could even be forced do so, if these notes are collected, verify and award marks for comprehensive and detail ones. This idea will help them to be active, attentive, regular, encourage cross checking of notes, make necessary corrections such as spelling mistakes which could be corrected through the use of their dictionary thereby promoting reading habits.

The idea of having a broader knowledge of all areas as postulated by broadfield curriculum may not be too good nowadays. Too much exposure of these students to other areas other than their real field of specialization may be doing more harm than good. The idea of producing half-baked graduates as often mentioned and hammered on, may not be far from being true and real if our over crowded curriculum is not review. Make it more

handy, flexible and encourage an in-depth study of ones area of specialization than a bit here and a little there. With these, there will be better improvement in the standard of Education in Ekiti State and in Nigeria as a whole.

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