

CHANGE OF COURSE OF STUDY AS CORRELATE OF MOTIVATION FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING

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Abstract

The research investigated the relationship between change of course of study and the motivation for academic excellence in higher institutions of learning. The objectives of the study investigated reasons why students accept changes to their course of study; examined the relationship between change of course of study and motivation for academic excellence in higher institutions of learning as well as proffer solutions to the problem associated with change of course of study. The design adopted was the survey method. A sample size of two hundred respondents was randomly selected. A self-designed and validated instrument titled "change of course of study and academic excellence in higher institutions of learning" was used to elicit data. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The result based on the research questions showed that students accept a change of course as a result of different reasons. In addition, a likely relationship was showed between the variables of interest using mean and standard deviation. None the least, allowing students to choose courses in line with their areas of strength was the most important solution proffered to problems associated with change of course of study (95% of the respondent were in agreement as opposed to 5% who expressed dissenting views). The only hypothesis was tested using Spearman's rank order correlation statistical test. The result recorded a strong positive and significant relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning ($r_{s(95)}=0.735$, $p=0.000$). Hence it was recommended that choice of change of course of study should be resident in the student. This will inspire students to excellence and Nigeria as a country will thus make greater progress.

Keywords: Education, Access, Academic Excellence, Change of Course, Motivation, Higher Institution of Learning

Education is essential in any society striving towards progress and expansion in every facet of life. It is largely viewed as the method of inculcating skills, knowledge and attitude which equips an individual to be self-sufficient and to contribute meaningfully to their society and the nation. Jaja (2013) opined that education is the medium through which culture is

expressed, improved upon, and entrenched. It is fundamental to the way thoughts are conceived and information is diffused. Hence life will seem inconceivable without the process of education. The National Policy on Education (2020) in Nigeria defines tertiary education to include: universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. The goals of tertiary education are itemized as follows:

- i. To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
- ii. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- iii. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- iv. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals to be self-reliant and become useful members of the society.
- v. To promote and encourage scholarship and community services.
- vi. To forge and cement national unity; and
- vii. To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Higher education in Nigeria dates back to 1934 when Yaba Higher College was established and in 1948 the first university, University of Ibadan, was established. Today in 2022, in addition to federal and private universities, almost all the States in Nigeria have one or more universities. A cursory look at the attempt by government to provide equal educational opportunities for all seems to have become a utopic ideal, desirable but unattainable, as implementation seems to fall far short of intentions. Access to higher education continues to meet with seemingly insurmountable challenges. One of such challenges represents a growing trend in the educational system in Nigeria which is insidious and portends evil for the future of the teeming masses of Nigerian youths. The issue of interest has to do with the whole process of decision making which ultimately leads to procurement of forms for admission into Nigerian universities and the ultimate anticipation of admission into Nigerian schools.

In the early eighties, prospective students anticipate admission into different courses of study with eagerness and quick beating hearts. They foresee being given admission, the respect and improvement in status this will accord them, the new life that awaits them on completion of their course of study and the ultimate desire to secure permanent employment in a prestigious organization where there is prospect of rising through the ranks and file and ultimately securing a management position in their latter years. Such was the gamut of emotions obviously associated with admission into a course of study in a higher institution of learning (Moti, 2010; Kanyip, 2013).

The not so obvious feelings associated with the process above is the decision making process that results in the ultimate choice to pursue a particular course of study. This decision is arrived at through different processes in Nigerian homes. The first way in which such a decision is taken is by the individual himself. The individual while in secondary school having identified his areas of strength, through the results obtained in different subjects as well as his passion for particular subjects, will then take a decision on the course of study to pursue at an higher institution of learning. For some other students who may not be able to reach a decisive decision about their sources of strength, such might be referred to the school guidance and counseling units and after some sessions with the counselor, the students might be better prepared to take a decision regarding this all important question which will have an impact on their future. The third means of arriving at a decision is through parental consultation. This is of two types: in the first the parents, pay close attention to the strengths and weaknesses of their children or ward, corroborated by the statement of results as well as the bent of such child, easily identifiable sometimes at home, especially by attentive parents. Such parents, in consultation with their children, arrive together at a course of study best suited for the temperament and strength of their children (Gonzalez, Holbein & Quilter, 2002; Chiwuzie, 2021). In the second, less attentive parents simply impose a course of study on their child or ward based on an understanding of the academic prowess of that child without taking into cognizance the passion such a child might have for particular subjects. In this case, the course of study suggested by the parents is diametrically opposed to that which would have been taken by the students (Victor, 2011; Mushtak & Khan, 2012). Often scenarios based on power tussles are enacted which involve a student having to change a course of study he would have loved to pursue to that imposed upon him by his parents for the simple reason that the child is a minor and dependent on his parents for academic

funding and sustenance. Such was the process involved in arriving at decision taking with regards to a course of study in the eighties. In present-day, the scenario remains the same with little variants but essentially the same results.

In contemporary times, access to higher institutions of learning is accompanied with rife, or stiff competition (Bakwaph, 2013). In spite of the increasing number of states and private universities, the participation rates of prospective candidates far outstrip the provision made to accommodate them in higher institutions of learning (Ehimetalor, 2005; Ajayi and Adeniji, 2009; Okemakinde, 2014; Odia, 2020). Increasing enrolment at the primary schools, swell admission into secondary schools. Students are easily given admission into secondary schools and the completion rates at secondary schools in Nigeria, though with its own challenges is rather high. Graduates from secondary schools with their senior secondary school (O, Level) and JAMB results begin the rigorous journey of trying to gain access into higher institutions of learning, particularly the universities. Admissions into universities are viewed by both parents and students alike as the highest culmination of a student's academic endeavor associated with massive benefits and economic prospects (Ubogu, 2011). Such admission brings joy, relief and expectation to the hearts of the students so blessed and the members of their families. Students fortunate enough to be given admission into universities are envied by less fortunate friends, and this sometimes strengthens the resolve of those not successful with admission to strive harder with hopeful expectation of success at a later date.

One would have thought that gaining admission into a university is like crossing a Rubicon and having accomplished this feat all that is required of the candidate is to trudge diligently, tenaciously, academically till they earn their first degree certificates. However, this is not the reality experienced by every student (Bagwap, 2013). Being given admission sometimes begins a quiet nightmarish existence for some students. Nightmarish? One may ask, and the reply is given in the affirmative. The reason being that a certain percentage of student, indeterminate during the process of admission, given admission into higher institutions of education yearly have to combat with changes of courses, especially if they do not meet the criteria for the course they so desired or happen for whatever reason to show up late for a desired admission.

When a candidate's course of study is changed, many as a result of the frenetic desperation with which admission is sought accept such changes in as much as they would still end up with the appellation of undergraduates (Odia, 2020). The misgiving begins after the euphoria of admission and matriculation is over and such students wake up to their new reality. They are dissatisfied with their new courses of study. Such dissatisfaction could stem from different reasons: First, the candidate might find himself without the requisite ability to cope with the new course of study. This could be the case when a student who spent three years in the science class is given admission into the social sciences or the faculty of education. The new course of study seems totally at variance with what the individual is used to. Second, the new course of study may suddenly awaken the candidate to the reality that their area of strength or the subject they are passionate about does not really feature as strongly in the new course of study (Amadi & Ogundiran, 2010). Lastly it could be that students from the onset applied for a course of study they were not interested in but which was foisted upon them by a significant other either before or during the process of admission. The reasons for dissatisfaction are inexhaustive. Whichever of the reasons above is relevant, the students find themselves saddled with courses they have no desire to excel at either innately or by choice (Sanja & Martinez, 2017). The issue identified above forms the background against which this research investigates the relationship between change of course of study and the motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning.

Statement of the Problem

The issue associated with change of course of subject, might seem inconsequential at first until a more vivid look reveals its negative implication for the individual, society and the Nigerian Economy. Students with no motivation to excel in a course of study might not be encouraged to invest their best even if they can just get by with not failing, but with just mere passes in the different subjects to be studied. Such students on graduation, IF, they do graduate, take the same lack luster performance into the labor force. This would have a negative impact on the Nigerian economy and the objective of higher education which is to contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training would have been thwarted. Consequently, students who are dispassionate with regards to their course of study lack the creativity, tenacity and diversity essential to be innovative and to generate ground breaking ideas necessary for any economy to progress and so raise its stature in the committee of nations.

Lastly, when the multiplier effect of studying a wrong course of study is considered, it shows an individual who lacks motivation and drive for improvement. One might observe individuals living quiet lives of desperation because who they are does not connect with what they do, one will encounter individuals who will most likely be lethargic about waking up daily because essentially they are waking up to the drudgery of another day. This could be the individuals' experience in the youthful period, which would mould their reality even in the future. Also innovations, advancement, notable inspiration, cutting edge inventions are not borne on the wings of boredom and dissatisfaction. These are the hallmark of energetic, passionate, vibrant and exuberant beings who are ready to give all it takes in terms of dedication, determination, drive, doggedness to improve the world they inhabit and by so doing make their existence count for themselves and their society. This study is motivated by the desire to investigate the relationship between change of course of study and the motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning.

Objectives of study

The objectives of study are to:

1. investigate reasons why students accept changes to their course of study.
2. examine the relationship between change of course of study and motivation for academic excellence in higher institutions of learning and
3. *proffer solutions to problems associated with change of course of study in higher institutions of learning.*

Research Questions

1. What makes students to accept changes to their course of study?
2. What is the relationship between *change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning?*
3. *What are the solutions to the problem associated with change of course of study in higher institutions of learning?*

Hypothesis

H_0 = There is no monotonic relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher Institutions of learning.

H_1 = There is a monotonic relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher Institutions of learning.

Methodology

The design used for the study was a survey method which involved administering copies of a questionnaire to the respondents and retrieving same after completion. The Population of Study includes all undergraduates in the three higher institutions of learning. A sample size of two hundred undergraduates from University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife and University of Ilorin were enumerated. The sampling technique employed was simple random sampling to ensure an unbiased representation of the total population. The respondents were from 200 and 300 level. They were so selected so the researcher can appraise the effect of the change of course on the students after they might have acclimatized to the new courses of study. The instrument used for the investigation was a questionnaire. The instrument considered the relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions' of learning in Nigeria. The questionnaire was designed

after the likert modified four point type scale with response options of Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was given to experts in the field of measurement and evaluation to ensure the instrument had relevant items capable of eliciting information required for the study. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The data obtained through the questionnaire was analyzed using frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient statistical test was utilized to test the hypothesis of the study. The Spearman's Correlation, calculates a coefficient, r or p , which is a measure of the strength and direction of association between the variables of interest. The level of statistical significance is measured by p . When the statistical significance is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the coefficient is statistically different from zero.

Results

Table 1: Summary of Students rating of their Abilities

Choose the option that best matches your response

1. How would you rate yourself as a student?

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	115	57.5%
Average	60	30.0%
Weak	25	12.5%
Total	200	100

From table 1 above, 57.5 percent of the respondents avowed they were excellent students, 30 percent believed they were average students while 12.5 percent of the respondents agreed to being weak academically.

Table 2: Summary of Admission for Course of Choice

2. I was given admission for the course of study I chose?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	105	52.5%
No	95	47.5%
Total	200	100

Table 2 above shows that more than half of the respondents agreed to being given their choices of course of study, while 47.5 percent submitted that they were not given the courses of study they chose.

Table 3: Summary of Rating on Perception Regarding Course of Study

3. If the answer to two above is No, how do you feel about the course you are now studying?

	Frequency	Percentage
Excited/passion	05	5.26%
Agreeable	10	10.52%
Indifferent	80	84.2%
Total	95	100

Table 3 shows that out of the 95 respondents who were not admitted to study the courses of their choice, 5.26 percent agreed to being passionate about the new course of study, 10.52 percent found the new courses of study agreeable and 84.21 percent responded that they were indifferent with regards to the course of study they found themselves studying.

Table 4: Summary of Rating on Perception Regarding Course of Study

4. How would you have felt, if you were admitted for your preferred course of study?

	Frequency	Percentage
Excited/passion	85	89.47%
Agreeable	10	10.53%
Indifferent	0	0.00%
Total	95	100

The result in table 4 above showed that 89.47 percent of the respondents would have been excited if they were given the course of study they preferred rather than the one they were currently studying. About 11 percent found the thought of studying their preferred course of study an agreeable one.

Table 5: Summary of Rating Regarding Change of Course of Study

5. Who made the choice about the change of course of study?

	Frequency	Percentage
Myself	04	4.21%
Parents	45	47.37%
Institution	46	48.42%
Total	95	100

Table 5 above revealed an interesting piece of information. About 95 percent of those who had to change their course of study adduced this to their parents and the institution of learning that they applied to for admission. Only 4.21 percent of the respondents took responsibility for changing their courses of study. For the others in this group the power of decision was resident either in the parents or the institution applied to.

Research Question One: What makes students to accept changes to the course of study?

Table 6: Summary of Ratings Regarding Change of Course of Study

6. Reason for accepting the change of course of study

	Frequency	Percentage
I have stayed home too long	20	21.1%
I wish to beat par with my colleagues	15	15.8%
I wanted to experience life away from home	15	15.8%
I accepted because my parents wanted me to	45	47.3%
Total	95	100%

The reasons given for accepting the change of course of study ranged amongst the options in table 6 above. The reason with the highest percentage showed that parental influence was key in the decision to accept the change of course to be studied from the one preferred to a different one.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning?

Table 7: Descriptive Analysis of the relationship between of change of course of study on motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning.

Item	SA	A	SD	D	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
7	100 (50%)	10 (5%)	50 (25%)	40 (20%)	200	2.85	2.60768
8	69 (34.5%)	18 (9%)	80 (40%)	33 (16.5%)	200	2.62	2.34094
9	100 (50%)	12 (6%)	50 (25%)	38 (19%)	200	2.87	2.61916
10	103 (51.5%)	8 (4%)	67 (33.5%)	22 (11%)	200	2.96	2.66271
11	10 (52.5%)	11 (5.5%)	60 (30%)	24 (12%)	200	2.99	2.68887
12	150 (75%)	20 (15%)	15 (7.5%)	5 (2.5%)	200	3.63	3.17017
13	155 (77.5%)	24 (12%)	10 (5%)	5 (2.5%)	200	3.62	3.18111
14	166 (83%)	21 (10.5%)	7 (3.5%)	6 (3%)	200	3.74	3.264966

Table 8a: Summary of Ratings on Solutions to the Problem Associated with Change of Course of Study

Research Question Three: What are the solutions to the problem associated with change of course of study?

		Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	The choice of course of study should lie with the student	102	63	25	10
16	Allowing students to make a choice regarding the course of study will ensure their success in such course of study?	98	77	10	15
17	Students should be allowed to choose courses in line with their areas of strength.	80	110	10	0
18	Public enlightenment through the media should be used to encourage study of courses in line with students strength	78	100	10	12
19	Parents should be discouraged from imposing courses of their choices on their children or wards.	80	100	10	10
20	Institutions of learning should not take on the responsibility of changing students' course of study.	68	102	20	10

Table 8b: Summary of Ratings on Solutions to the Problem Associated with Change of Course of Study.

Items	Agree	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
15	165	82.5%	35	17.5%
16	175	87.5%	25	12.5%
17	190	95%	10	5%
18	178	89%	22	11%
19	180	90%	20	10%
20	170	85%	30	15%

Test of Hypothesis

H_0 = There is no monotonic relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher Institutions of learning.

H_1 = There is a monotonic relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher Institutions of learning.

Table 9: Correlational Analysis between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher Institutions of learning.

Variables	Degree of Freedom	R	P-value
Course of Study, Motivation for Excellence	93	0.735	.000 (2-tailed)

Discussion of Findings

With regards to research question one, some of the reasons given for accepting the change of course of study includes; staying at home for a long time after completion of secondary school, a desire to be at par with other colleagues in higher institutions of learning, some of the respondents wished to experience life outside their homes while others did because their parents asked them to. This result is in line with studies like Gonzalez et al, (2002) & Bagwap, (2013) who opined that parental involvement was positively related to goal orientation of high school students. The reason with the highest percentage showed that parental influence was key in the decision to accept the change of course to be studied from the one preferred to a different one.

With regards to the second research question the results showed the impact of change of course of study on the desire of students to excel academically in higher institutions of learning. Table 7 above shows the distribution of the responses on the relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning. Item 14 shows that the respondents given the opportunity would have loved to pursue their choice of course of study, (83% of the respondents agreed to this statement). Item 13 also showed a high proportion of the respondent agreeing to the idea that individuals who chose their courses of study have a sense of being in control of their destiny, 77.5% supported this statement as opposed to 10.5 % who disagreed with this. Item 12 also showed the distribution of responses for the statement which proposes that, the choice of course of study influences one's motivation to work in a related career at a later date. 75% of the respondents were in support, 25% were against this proposition. The responses above indicate that there might be a relationship between change of course of study and motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning. This result above is not conclusive and will be subjected to correlational test subsequently to ascertain this.

Research question three sought to proffer solution to the problem resulting from changing the course of study, the respondents expressed the view that allowing students to choose courses in line with their areas of strength was the most important solution as 95 percent of students agreed to this. This result was

corroborated by Victor (2010) who observed that consistently lower performance by students should be addressed by targeting courses specifically suited to addressing learning gaps in particular individuals. In addition, the respondents were of the opinion that parental influences in taking such decisions should be discouraged, 90 percent of the students agreed to this and only 10 percent of the respondents disagreed. Looking at the role played by institutions of learning, the respondents were of the opinion that institutions should not be saddled with this responsibility. Overall the respondents believe the choice of course of study should lie only with the students.

The result for correlational analysis shows $r_{493} = 0.735$ with a p value of .000 for a two tailed test. The r value ($r_{493} = 0.735$) showed a strong positive relationship with motivation for excellence in higher institutions of learning. The result was also significant, meaning the relationship between the two variables was statistically different from zero ($P=0.00$). This result corroborates Yusuf Oseni and Adejoh (2016) who submitted that the subject or course content is a strong factor motivating academic excellence in undergraduate engineering students. This goes to show that sticking to a course of study suited to a student's ability yields great gains with regards to displaying excellence at the institution of learning and at a career of choice later in the future.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the issue of imposing change of courses on students is seen as a development that will militate against excellent performance in academics. Such decision taken without consulting the students whether by parents or institutions of learning should be discouraged. Allowing students to make this all important decision, infuses them with a feeling of being responsible for their own destiny. Hence the passion, determination, innate abilities and skills required for excellence is brought to the fore, enabling students to perform excellently in higher institutions of learning. This excellence will be replicated later in their careers and Nigeria as a country will take giant strides and make laudable progress as a country.

Recommendations

1. The choice of course of study should lie with the student alone.

2. Institutions of Higher learning may advice candidate on change of course of study but such changes should not be imposed on students.
3. There might be need for parental guidance when choosing a course of study for students, however parents role should be guidance and consultative in nature, no decision should be forced on students overtly or covertly.

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