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## Determinants of Students' performance on the Nurse tutors programme, Kaduna: Implication for Nursing Education in Nigeria.

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### Abstract

This report reviews performance of students on the Federal Ministry of Health's Nurse tutors Programme, Kaduna. Records of 139 students registered between 1986/87 - 1996/97 academic sessions were examined for students' persistence on the course and factors related to their academic performance. The exercise revealed that 92.1% of them completed the course and none had less than a lower credit. Gender, type of educational qualification, place of origin, number of professional qualifications and area of specialization on the programme, were found to be significantly related to the students' academic performance. Marital status was only marginally related to performance while age, sponsor, and number of papers obtained at WASC/SSC/GCE and Teacher's Grade 11 were found not to be significantly related to students' academic performance. These findings suggest a need for non-traditional approaches to nursing education at higher levels to enable more professionals benefit from degree and graduate nursing programmes.

### Introduction

Many are aware that factors other than academic talent help to determine a student's success or failure in school (Felder et al, 1994). According to Fearing (1996), no single instrument or set of variable have been recognized as a predictor of success in nursing courses or for any specific group of students. Yet, it is important that academic and non-academic trends in any educational programme be examined periodically for effectiveness if such educational programmes are to remain relevant to the contemporary society. Hence, the review of the Nurse Tutors Programme at this time.

### Purpose of the study

The study was undertaken to:

- (i) evaluate the Nurse tutors programme since it changed to two years in 1986;
- (ii) identify factors that favour students' academic performance on the programme;
- (iii) provide data-based information on the programme to the Federal Ministry of Health;
- (iv) utilize the findings in making appropriate recommendations to relevant bodies, towards the development of nursing in Nigeria.

### Hypothesis

\* Correspondence

There will be no statistically significant relationship between the students' final grades and the various students' characteristics examined in the study - gender, age, marital status, place of origin, educational qualification, professional qualification, specialty and sponsor.

### Methodology

One hundred and thirty-nine students registered for the Diploma in Nursing Education Programme from the 1986/87 academic session to 1996/97. This represents eleven successive classes. Out of this number, 10(7.2%) voluntarily withdrew and 1 (0.7%) died, while 128 (92.1%) completed the course (Table 1). Only the 128 students who completed the course were included in the study.

**Table 1 Distribution of Students - 1986/87 - 1996/97 sets**

Students who	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	Total
a. Completed course	9	16	12	16	10	11	8	13	13	16	4	128 (92.1%)
b. Withdrew from course	1	1	2	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	10 (7.2%)
c. Died during course	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1 (0.7%)
<b>Total Registered</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>139 100%</b>

Personal files of the students kept in the programme office, and the students' results from the departmental examination office, constituted the sources of data utilized in the study.

### Presentation and discussion of results

The programme has maintained a high persistence rate among the students over the years. The drop in number of registered students in 1996 was due to lack of sponsorship for most of the candidates who were from the armed forces. This low withdrawal rate may be due to the policy of the programme whereby students are nominated by their employers out of a sense of need for nurse educators.

Generally, all the students who sat for the final examinations passed. However, only 2(1.6%) passed at distinction level. Majority 81(63.3%) passed at upper credit level and 45 (35.1%) at lower credit level. None finished up at "pass" level. The women performed better than the men academically. The only 2 students who had distinction were women. This was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating a relationship between gender and

**Table 2 Gender and final grade**

Gender	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/ upper credit	Lower credit		
Male	20(40%)	30(60%)	50(100%)	$\chi^2$ 22.215
Female	63(80.8%)	15(19.2%)	78(100%)	Df 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83(64.9%)</b>	<b>45(35.1%)</b>	<b>128(100%)</b>	<b>P-Value .000</b>

students' performance

Boocock (1972) opined that each sex tends to outperform the other at some phase of the school career, and that there seems to be substantive areas of sexual "specialty" from the beginning of school years. However, Adelman (1991) observed that women's grade point averages in college were higher than men's no matter what field they studied. Although in the study by Einarson and Santiago (1996), women reported lower academic self-confidence and gender was only marginally predictive of academic self-efficacy, Adelman (1991) noted that women had positive attitudes towards education and they believed they truly benefitted from schooling. This probably accounts for their more time-management skills than men's while in school (Trueman and Hartley, 1996). Another possible explanation for the lower level of performance among the male students may be the fact that 30% of the men had Grade 11 teacher's certificate compared with only 6.8% of the women (Table 3)

**Table 3 Gender and type of educational qualification**

Gender	Type of educational qualification		Total
	WAEC/ GCE/SSE	Grade II Teachers	
Male	35(70%)	15(30%)	50(100%)
Female	69(93.2%)	5(6.8%)	74(100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>104(83.9%)</b>	<b>20(16.1%)</b>	<b>124(100%)</b>

The youngest student was aged 23 years and the oldest 44 years. The mean age was 30-46 years. One student each from the 23-29 years and 30-36 years groups finished up at distinction level. There was however no statistically significant relationship between age and the students' performance ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 4)

**Table 4 Age and final grades**

Age in years	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/ Upper credit	Lower Credit		
23-29	46(69.7%)	20(30.3%)	66(100%)	$\chi^2$ 3.568
30-36	29(55.8%)	23(44.2%)	52(100%)	Df 2
37-44	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)	P-Value .168
<b>Total</b>	<b>83(64.9%)</b>	<b>45(35.1%)</b>	<b>128(100%)</b>	

Trueman and Hartley (1996) also observed that academic

performance was only modestly predicted by age although the older students had better time management skills than younger students. Comparing study skills of adult and traditional-age college students, Richardson (1995) found out that older students had persistence and educational attainment at least as high as that of the traditional-age students. Similarly, Lindner and Harris (1992) reported a substantial relationship between self-regulated learning and grade point average with the ability to self-regulate the learning process increasing with age and academic experience.

The single or unmarried students seemed to have done much better than their married counterparts. The two students who had distinction were single (table 5). However, the difference in performance was only marginally significant with  $0.05 > p > 0.01$

**Table 5 Marital status and academic performance**

Marital Status	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/ upper credit	Lower credit		
Married	50(58.8%)	35(41.2%)	85(100%)	$\chi^2$ 4.023
Single	33(76.7%)	10(23.3%)	43(100%)	Df 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83(64.9%)</b>	<b>45(35.1%)</b>	<b>128(100%)</b>	<b>P-Value .045</b>

This observation is contrary to findings in Oyinlade's study in 1992 where he found out that the married students were more likely to have higher grade point averages (GPA). Inoue (1997) found out that marital status had no influence on educational attainment, but the number of children had a negative effect on educational attainment. Kent State University (K.S.U) (1994) reported that 82% of the respondents with children and child care age wanted on-campus child care. Studies may indeed have indicated that marital status is not a 'problem' the number and stage of development of the children of students in this study might have been the factors responsible for their lower grades.

The predominance of northern students over those from Western and Eastern parts of the country is expected. This is because the Kaduna programme is located in the northern part of the country and similar programmes are available in the west and east. Similarly, there are degree nursing education programme in the other parts of the country while the Nurse Tutors Programme remains the highest post-basic nursing education programme in the north. Most (95.2%) of the eastern students came to Kaduna for the midwife tutor specialty which is not available in their locality (Table 7a). Students from the east performed best followed by those from the west. None from the north finished at distinction level. The test of significance seems to suggest a significant relationship

**Table 6 Place of origin and final grades**

Place of Origin	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/Upper credit	Lower Credit		
North	59(58.4%)	42(41.6%)	101(100%)	$\chi^2$ 8.783 Df 2 P-Value .012
West	5(83.3%)	1(16.7%)	6(100%)	
East	19(90.5%)	2(9.5%)	21(100%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>83(64.9%)</b>	<b>45(35.1%)</b>	<b>128(100%)</b>	

\*\*\*Test is suspect because of some low cell values

between the students' place of origin and their academic performance (Table 6) Since all the students with Grade 11 teachers' certificate came from the north (Table 7(b) and one-third of the northerners had only one professional qualification. (Table 7(c) the lower academic performance of the northerners may be a function of their type of educational and professional qualifications as these two were significantly related to academic performance (Table 8(b) and 9).

**Table 7 Place of origin and students' characteristic**

Students' Characteristics	Place of origin			Total
	North	West	East	
<b>a. Specialty:</b>				
Nursing	57(56.4%)	4(66.7%)	1(4.8%)	62
Midwifery	44(43.6%)	2(33.3%)	20(95.2%)	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>101(100%)</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>21(100%)</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>b. Type of Educational Qualification:</b>				
WASC/GCE	78(79.6%)	6(100%)	20(100%)	104
Grade II	20(20.4%)			20
<b>Total</b>	<b>98(100%)</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>20(100%)</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>c. Professional Qualification:</b>				
Single	34(33.7%)			34
Dual	66(65.3%)	6(100%)	20(95.2%)	92
> Dual	1(1.0%)		1(4.8%)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>101(100%)</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>21(100%)</b>	<b>128</b>

The students had between 0-9 papers with a mean value of 4.5 papers. There was no statistically significant relationship between the number of "papers" and academic performance

**Table 8 Educational qualification and final grades**

Educational Qualification	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/Upper credit	Lower Credit		
<b>a. No of Papers:</b>				
≤ 2	7(43.8%)	9(56.2%)	16(100%)	$\chi^2$ 5.139 Df 3 P-Value .162
3	14(77.8%)	4(22.2%)	18(100%)	
4	17(63%)	10(37%)	27(100%)	
≥ 5	43(68.3%)	20(31.7%)	63(100%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>81(65.3%)</b>	<b>43(34.7%)</b>	<b>124(100%)</b>	
<b>b. Type:</b>				
WASC/GCE	75(72.1%)	29(27.9%)	104(100%)	$\chi^2$ 13.134 Df 1 P-Value .000
T. Grade II	6(30%)	14(70%)	20(100%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>81(65.3%)</b>	<b>43(34.7%)</b>	<b>124(100%)</b>	

( $p > 0.05$ ). Although the group with the lowest percentage of students at the upper credit level was that of students with "< 2 papers", the percentage did not increase with the number of papers the candidates had. However, the relationship between the type of educational qualification and academic performance was statistically significant (Table 8(b).

Those who had secondary school education and possessed the WASC/SSC/GCE certificate performed better than those who went to teacher training colleges and had the Teachers' Grade 11 certificate (Table 8 (b). For nursing, Fearing (1996) discovered that high school rank, biology and english scores predicted success best for associate degree nursing students while the number of science course taken and language skills predicted academic success best for students in diploma programme. It therefore shows that for nursing education at any level, at least a science subject is necessary, and the level of science at the Grade 11 teachers training programme is inadequate for nursing. Candidates with Teachers' Grade 11 are no more admitted with effect from 1998/99. Although the required educational qualification is a minimum of five credits obtained at not more than two sittings, and must include English language plus at least a science subject, concessions are granted to candidates from educationally disadvantaged states as it is done in some other tertiary institutions in the country. It is however done with a rider that deficiencies must be cleared before the final examination. In Nigeria, educational qualifications are important for admission to post secondary institutions. This is based on the assumption that candidates with high entry grades will perform better than those with low entry grades (Momoh-Olle, 1998). For adult students however, results of the study by Kasworm and Pike (1994) suggested that the traditional models are inappropriate.

Neither of the two students who had more than two certificates had lower credit. The relationship between professional qualification and academic performance of the students was highly significant with  $p < 0.05$  (Table 9).

**Table 9 Professional qualification and final grades**

Professional qualification	Final grades		Total	Test of significance
	Distinction/upper credit	Lower credit		
Single	9(26.5%)	25(73.5%)	34(100%)	$\chi^2$ 29.905 Df 1 P-Value .000
≥ Dual	74(78.7%)	20(21.3%)	94(100%)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>83(64.9%)</b>	<b>45(35.1%)</b>	<b>128(100%)</b>	

Those with more than one professional qualification obviously had more academic experience. This seems to confirm the results of the study by Lindner and Harris (1992) which showed that ability to self-regulate learning processes increases with academic experience, and self-regulated learning was substantially related to grade point average. Another possible explanation for the observed difference in performance among the professional qualification groups

may be Cantwell and Moore's (1998) observation. They noted that higher academic grades were related, among other things, to the students' intention to "achieve" and their ability to generate alternative learning strategies with changing task demands.

Almost equal number of students registered for each of the two specialties. More than half of the students in the nursing group had only the General Nursing Certificate while all those for midwifery were women and had additional professional qualification (Table 10a & b).

**Table 10 Specialty and students' characteristics**

Students' Characteristic	Specialty		Total
	Nursing	Midwifery	
<b>a. Gender:</b>			
Male	50(80.6%)	-	50(39%)
Female	12(19.4%)	66(100%)	78(61%)
Total	62(100%)	66(100%)	128(100%)
<b>b. Professional Qualification</b>			
Single	34(54.8%)	-	34(26.5%)
Dual	27(43.5%)	65(98.5%)	92(71.9%)
> Dual	1(1.6%)	1(1.5%)	2(1.6%)
Total	62(100%)	66(100%)	128(100%)

Students in the midwifery group performed much better academically. This finding was statistically significant, suggesting that academic performance is related to the students' specialty.

**Table 11 Specialty and academic performance**

Specialty	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/upper credit	Lower credit		
Nursing	28(45.2%)	34(54.2%)	62(100%)	$\chi^2$ 20.434
Midwifery	55(83.3%)	11(16.7%)	66(100%)	Df 1
Total	83(64.9%)	45(35.1%)	128(100%)	P-Value .000

This is probably because men dominated the nursing group and 33 (66.0%) of them had single professional qualification. Similarly, 92% of those in the nursing group were from the north.

Although the two students who had distinction were state government sponsored, students from mission and teaching hospitals seemed to do better with almost three-quarters of

**Table 12 Sponsor and performance**

Sponsor	Final grades		Total	Test of Significance
	Distinction/Upper credit	Lower Credit		
State/FCT	69(64.5%)	38(35.5%)	107(100%)	$\chi^2$ .951
Mission	6(75.0%)	2(25.0%)	8(100%)	Df 3
T/ Hospitals	5(71.4%)	2(28.6%)	7(100%)	P-Value .813
Armed Forces	3(50.0%)	3(50.0%)	6(100%)	
Total	83(64.9%)	45(35.1%)	128(100%)	

\*\*\*Test in respect of some low cell value

them at the upper credit level, while those from the armed forces had least percentage of students at the upper credit level. However, the test of significance seems to suggest that no significant relationship exist between sponsor and the students' performance (Table 12).

The financial support by sponsors have varied over the years from study leave without pay, to salary only, and full sponsorship. The armed forces and the state governments appear to be the least supportive, while the teaching and mission hospitals are more selective in their choice and usually provisions are made for those selected. The support from teaching and mission hospitals probably accounts for the persistence of all their candidates on the programme as there was no voluntary withdrawal among their students. K.S.U. (1994) observed that students who were not on financial aid identified financial difficulties as the greatest barrier to academic performance.

#### Implication of findings for Nursing in Nigeria

The findings of this study have implications for three important aspects of nursing education in Nigeria. These are:

##### i. Entry behaviour

Secondary school education and professional nursing qualifications were observed to be predictive of students' success in higher nursing education. Similarly, the performance of students on the programme showed that matured professional nurses can benefit from higher education and infact do very well academically when given the opportunity. Section 5, sub-section 40 (a) of the 1985 National Policy on education reads:

**Maximum effort will be made to enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given access to it. Such access may be through Universities, correspondence courses, or open universities, or part-time and work-study programmes, etc.**

The researcher supports the decision of the programme not to admit candidates with Grade 11 Teachers' certificate without secondary school education. She also believes that the 5 credits including English language and at least one science subject now required at all levels of nursing education in the country will promote self-confidence and self-efficacy of the learners. However, the researcher is of the opinion that nurses trained before the strict enforcement of the 5 credits minimum entry requirement, who have more than one professional qualification and 5-10 years experience, should be given the opportunity for a degree nursing programme if they are interested (especially for hospital and community practice). This is more so when they would have offered English language and applied science which run through all non-degree nursing programmes, to assist

students with their deficiencies.

An opportunity like this will enable nurses improve themselves and promote high standard of professional practice. It will also curb the current migration of nurses into education, law, public administration, accountancy, etc. in search of a first degree, for self actualization. Such programmes have no "direct" relevance to their daily schedule of duties and so not often rewarded by their employers. It is a common knowledge that such nurses even perform better academically than the other students enrolled for such alternative (to nursing) programmes.

### *ii. Status of the Nurse tutors programme*

Curriculum of the 2 year Nurse Tutors Programme is richer in education courses though it contains courses from the social, medical, nursing and basic sciences. On the other hand, the post-basic degree nursing programme is richer in the medical and nursing sciences though it also contains courses in education and social sciences. Despite these gross areas of similarities and the fact that majority of students of the Nurse Tutor Programme (NTP) finished at credit level, (NTP) graduates are still required to spend 3 years for the degree nursing programme.

There is therefore a need for nursing programmes in Nigeria to be harmonized and organized in such a way that there is no undue overlap, repetition, and waste of time. Professionals should be able to benefit from exemptions or special concessions where necessary, as obtainable in other professions. For example, NTP graduate could be exempted from some courses at the degree level and spend only two years. If such considerations are not possible then the NTP should be replaced with the over sixteen years old proposed degree programme for NTP graduates. All nurses interested in or to be sponsored for nursing education should then go in directly for the post-basic degree nursing or post-generic-nursing-degree PGDE or Masters in Education. The Nurse Tutors Programme could also be transformed into resource centre of international standard, to meet research and development needs of the profession.

### *iii. Implementation of post-basic degree programmes*

The study showed that professional (diploma) nurses can do very well at higher educational level. Therefore, they need not be limited by a stop-over at diploma performance in future. Ample opportunity should be provided for as many qualified diploma nurses as possible to benefit from degree nursing programmes. The number of universities offering degree programmes in nursing should be increased to cope with the ever increasing demand for the course by qualified candidates. This study revealed that many of the students even had the required number of credits but could not go for the degree probably because of the limited spaces and distance. Many who were offered admission declined,

preferring other degree courses to Tutors' Diploma.

Departments of Nursing at the Universities of Ibadan and Nigeria (Nsukka) as well as Ahmadu Bello and Obafemi Awolowo Universities should liaise with schools of Post-Basic Nursing, Nurse Tutors Programmes, etc. (with resource persons and facilities) towards establishing centres for B.Sc Nursing for professional (diploma) nurses. Open universities, part-time and work-study programmes characterize the current global trends in manpower development. Nursing does not have to wait for another century to be sensitized to the need for such strategies in producing highly qualified professionals in Nigeria. After the initial traditional institution-based basic nursing education, non-traditional approaches can be employed for further nursing training. Many professions are departing from the traditional recruitment and training approaches so that they can engage and retain the very best hands in their fields.

Most employers will not release nurses for three years degree programme. In fact, the staff training policy of the civil service allows workers to be away on full-time for only one year. Although part-time students are not sponsored by government, there is no time limit for such, hence the need to bring degree nursing as close as possible to the door step of interested nurses. Majority of the students from the north performed at a lower level than their counterparts from other parts of the country. This indicates a need for creating opportunity for the tutors to further improve themselves in nursing. Yet there is no post basic degree nursing programme in the north. The B.NSc programme at ABU Zaria is generic and for 5 years.

Lack of qualified personnel and increased costs involved in higher education programmes were identified by Saxton (1981) as some of the problems in establishing university programme for nurses in Canada in the 1940's. These problems apply in Nigeria today too. However, they can be overcome. Determined efforts by Federal and State governments as well as Nursing Associations to sponsor pioneer candidates for degree and post graduate programmes in Nigeria and other countries (as was done when the Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan was to be established in 1960's) will solve the problem of lack of manpower. The distant learning approach on the other hand, will distribute the cost between the programme organisers and beneficiaries. Existing structures could also be used to minimize cost. For example, the Department of Nursing, ABU Zaria can organize the post-basic degree programme using its own structures and the facilities at the Nurse Tutors Programme Kaduna Polytechnic. More clinical and non-clinical areas of specialization relevant to the needs of the country can be incorporated into the programme to replace the unending lists of unquantifiable post-basic diplomas in

the profession.

### **Conclusion**

The persistence of students on the Nurse Tutors Programme shows the continued need for professionally trained teachers in nursing institutions. It is also an indication of nurses' desire for higher education. The sustained academic performance of the students at the distinction and credit levels, with none at ordinary 'pass' level also makes the challenge of raising the minimum level of training for nurse educators to degree level stronger. Not only will the students be able to cope with degree programmes, it will also eliminate the duplication of courses and the frustration suffered by the graduates of the NTP programme over the years in search of first degree(s).

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