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Abstract

Student engagement is all about how students feel, act, and think about their experiences in school. It's essential because it helps keep students in school and improves their performance. This study investigated the costs and benefits of getting students engaged in secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The researchers had two main questions they wanted to answer. 1,200 secondary school students from a total population of 8,746 using a reliable questionnaire. They analysed the data they collected using statistical tools like mean and standard deviation. The results showed that engaging students had some costs, such as increasing the number of students in schools and the money spent by the government and parents on education. But the benefits were valuable, too, like better academic performance, having skilled workers in the country, and reducing disciplinary problems and crime rates. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the government should invest more in schools and provide scholarships to smart but needy students to boost their engagement in school activities.

Introduction

Conner (2016) explained that student engagement is a serious issue of concern among stakeholders today because it is responsible for the increase in dropout rate in schools. Fredricks, Filsecker, and Lawson (2016) stated that engagement is important because it relates to student outcomes such as improved academic performance, completion rates, and satisfaction with school programmes.

Students' level of engagement with school especially in developing nations like Nigeria may be difficult to measure and this poses threat to the students and society in terms of unemployment and incarceration for the students, and the lack of productive citizenship for the society. Marks (as cited in Conner, 2016) stated that engagement has been used synonymously with words such as active, attentive, interest, motivation, and effort. Ainley, Frydenberg, and Russell (as cited in Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012) pointed out a clear difference between motivation and engagement explaining that motivation is about energy and direction, the reasons for behaviour, why we do what we do while engagement describes the energy in action, the connection between person and activity. Engagement is a broad construct that reflects a person's enthusiastic participation in a task (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Similarly, Skinner, Kindermann and Furrer (2008) stated that engagement is the quality of a student's connection or involvement with everything about the school.

Students' engagement is therefore defined as the experience of centripetal connection of the student to the school and the extent to which students are ready to learn. Hu and Kuh (2001, as cited in Trowler, 2010) defined engagement as the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes. Similarly, Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek (2007 as cited in Trowler, 2010) defined student engagement as participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom which leads to a range of measurable outcomes.

Students' engagement literature has identified three major dimensions as cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement. The cognitive dimension refers to the students' personal investment encompassing the interest to devote extra hours to learn difficult task not understood in the school; emotional dimension is related to the relationships that exist with members of the school involving a strong feeling of sense of belonging to the school, while behavioural dimension refers to absence of disruptive conduct regarding school norms (Veiga, Robu, Appleton, Festas, & Galvão, 2014; Appleton, Christenson, Dongjin, & Reschly, 2006; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Student engagement according to Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, and Lehr (2004) therefore, involves positive student behaviors, such as attendance, paying attention, and participation in class, as well

as the psychological experience of identification with school and feeling that one is cared for, respected, and part of the school environment.

Engaging students in the learning process is an important factor for addressing performance and expanding access especially for the disadvantaged students. The effect of Covid-19 pandemic has led some students out of the school system and only engaging school programmes can make them return as well as keep them in school. School engagement obviously depends on the perception of students about their experiences in the school and this describes students' feelings, behaviors, and thoughts about their school experiences.

Student engagement in classroom activities is an important factor in the school which aids achievement and school completion (Bryson & Hand, 2007). Bodovski and Farkas (2007) found that student engagement was a stronger predictor of achievement test scores than either initial test scores or time spent studying. Engagement has been shown to be malleable and responsive to variations in the learning environment (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Students' engagement which refers to the rate at which students spend their time and ability to actively participate in school programmes and activities is achieved when school programmes and curricula meet the needs of students and motivates them to learn.

Obviously, the level of students' engagement varies both within an individual student and among students in the school system. Students' disengagement with school affects the students' learning outcomes, quality of graduates of the school system, attainment of school goals and objectives, waste of fund and resources devoted to education, increased rate of school dropout among others. Prior to dropping out, students experience disconnection with school programmes and activities as well as the curricular (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, & Pagani, 2009). By understanding and promoting student engagement, schools can actively work to increase the engagement of their students, and thus, their school success. Student engagement is necessary for enhancing positive youth development, helping students to gain knowledge and skills to succeed especially in their future careers (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

The process of enhancing students' engagement leads to a situation of bringing up a balance between cost-benefit analysis. The term cost-benefit analysis implies a systematic comparison of the magnitude of the costs and benefits of some form of investment, to assess its economic profitability. Cost-benefit analysis involve a sacrifice of present consumption to secure future benefits in the form of higher levels of output or income. Cost-benefit analysis (or rate-of-return analysis, which is the type of cost-benefit analysis most frequently applied to education) provides a means of appraising these future benefits in the light of the costs that must be incurred in the present. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a measure of the expected yield of the investment, as a guide to rational allocation of resources. Cost-benefit calculation is necessary to assess the likely profitability of investment. In recent years economists have paid increasing attention to the application of cost-benefit analysis to public investment, and sophisticated techniques have been developed for measuring the costs and benefits of, for example, water resource and transport projects. Such projects are clearly analogous to private investments in physical capital, and it is not surprising that techniques that are useful to the businessman should also prove useful to governments in making investment decisions in education. This paper therefore examined the cost-benefit analysis of students' engagement in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The nation's ivory towers are established to train the needed manpower by inculcating the needed personal, social, and intellectual development required to be self-reliant and contribute to the growth and development of the economy. This has led to the introduction of different programmes and initiatives targeted at improving the quality of graduates of the university system. However, despite these laudable programmes, employers of labour and other stakeholders still complain about the quality of graduates of the universities in Nigeria. Employers at different fora had stated that these graduates are not employable and that they have to spend huge amount of money in training and retraining the graduates before they can perform on the job. Researchers identified lack of facilities, poor funding, lack of qualified teachers and poor students' engagement as some of the serious issues facing academic institutions at all levels in Nigeria.

It has been observed that students are not interested in school and do not desire to participate in school programmes and activities. Similarly, the level of concentration in class or time on task has

reduced drastically with a spill-over effect on students' performance and quality offered to potential employers. The students seem to disregard or ignore relationship with members of the school system because they have lost interest in schooling and are not willing to learn or take out extra time for self-development. Unless this trend is quickly reversed and students are made to be cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally engaged, students' performance will continue to drop, there will be low level of commitment among students, increase in crime rate, destruction of government's properties, organized crime among youth, drug abuse, high rate of rape and violence among others in the society. Therefore, there is the need for stakeholders to understand the cost and benefit of students' engagement in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives

The focus of the study was to examine the cost-benefit analysis of students' engagement in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- 1) Determine the cost of students' engagement.
- 2) Identify the benefits of students' engagement.
- 3) Examine the relationship between students' engagement and academic performance.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1) What are the cost of students engagement?
- 2) What are the benefits of students' engagement?
- 3) What is the relationship between students' engagement and academic performance?

Research Hypothesis

- 1) There is no significant relationship between students' engagement and academic performance.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was all the 8746 senior secondary school teachers while the sample was 1200 teachers determined using Taro Yemane's formula and they were selected using the multi stage sampling approach. At the first stage, the researchers divided Lagos State into the six existing Education Districts after which the participants were selected using the proportionate sampling technique based on the population of students in each Education District. The actual participants of the study were selected using the

simple random sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire titled Cost-Benefit analysis of Students Engagement Scale (CBASES) was used to collect the needed information from the participants. The questionnaire was divided into two parts (Parts A & B). Part A comprised personal information of participants while Part B contains statements that sought information on the research questions and hypotheses raised by the researcher. The instrument was designed on a Four-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). The research instrument was validated by experts and suggestions were effected to produce the final draft of the instrument. In determining the reliability of the instrument in this study, the instrument was administered on 30 students in Education District V, Lagos State. The data collected was analysed using the Cronbach alpha reliability technique and a reliability coefficient of .72 proved the instrument was reliable. The researchers used two trained research assistants to administer copies of the instrument in each Education District. Descriptive statistics such as Mean and Standard deviation was used to determine the cost and benefits of students' engagement (0-2.49= Low; 2.50 and above=High) while inferential statistics such as Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistics was used to test the stated research hypothesis at .05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

The result of the analysis is presented below.

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the costs of students' engagement?

Table 1:

Costs of Students Engagement

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD
1.	Increase in government spending on education	2.56	1.32
2.	Increase in parental spending	2.51	1.30
3.	Community involvement in school programmes.	2.48	1.26
4.	Increase in students' population in the school system.	2.41	1.14
5.	Increased parental monitoring and support.	2.23	1.10
	GRAND MEAN	2.44	

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Information on Table 1 shows the different cost of students' engagement as rated by the participants. The result of the analysis shows that the cost of students' engagement is low in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What are the benefits of students' engagement?

Table 2:

Benefits of Students Engagement

S/N	ITEMS	MEAN	SD
1.	Students' attend classes and participate with enthusiasm in challenging academic activities.	3.12	2.04
2.	Students invest extra time in active and collaborative learning.	3.08	2.02
3.	Improved students' academic performance	3.05	2.02
4.	Increased Students satisfaction with school programmes	3.02	2.00
5.	Supply of quality manpower in the country	3.00	2.00
6.	Reduced disciplinary problems in the school system.	2.97	1.89
7.	It helps to instill teamwork in learners.	2.89	1.85
8.	Reduction in crime rate in the society;	2.81	1.83
GRAND MEAN		2.99	

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Information on Table 2 shows the different benefits of students' engagement as rated by the participants. The result of the analysis shows that the benefits of students' engagement is high in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between students' engagement and academic performance.

Table 3:

Students' Engagement and Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Students Engagement		15.59	7.62					
	1200			1198	.78	0.001	Sig	Ho ₁ Rejected
Students' Academic Performance		13.21	4.79					

Sig @ P<0.05

From Table 3, it is shown that there was positive, strong and significant relationship between students' engagement and academic performance in public secondary schools in Lagos State ($r=.78$; $df=1198$; $P<.05$). Thus, the hypothesis which stated that students' engagement is not significantly related to academic performance was rejected. This implies that there is a significant

relationship between students' engagement and academic performance in public secondary schools in Lagos State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis shows that the cost of students' engagement is low while the benefits of students' engagement is high in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. This implies that the benefits of students' engagement outweigh its cost in public senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Therefore, every stakeholder in education will benefit when students are actively engaged with school programmes and activities. There was positive, strong, and significant relationship between students' engagement and academic performance in public secondary schools in Lagos State. This implies that active students' engagement where students devote more time to their studies, learn and understand difficult concept or activities at home, eager to attend classes and participate in school programmes will improve the academic performance in public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. This agrees with the result of the work by Amando (2019) where it was found that students' engagement significantly relates to academic performance of students.

Conclusion

The government and other stakeholders are of the opinion that Universities will supply quality manpower to the industry. However, a strong lacuna has been observed between the employers of labour and the University system in Nigeria because the universities that were established to supply the right quality and number of graduates are failing in their responsibilities as it does not supply the right type, quantity and quality of labour expected by the industry leaving a lacuna to be filled and corrected by the government.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussion, it was therefore recommended that:

1. Government should increase funding of the school system to ensure students have access to the right facilities and equipment.
2. Government should provide scholarship opportunities for indigent and brilliant students to enhance their engagement to school programmes.
3. Institutional managers should ensure efficient and purposeful utilization of fund allocated to schools.

4. The government and parents should discourage every act of examination malpractice to enhance students' engagement in the school.
5. Parents should monitor students' academic progress to identify disengagement and make sure it is quickly addressed to guarantee continuous engagement with the school.
6. Institution managers should provide a friendly environment and ensure safety and welfare of learners for effective engagement in the school.
7. The government should ensure review of the curriculum to meet the need of global education in modern times to ensure graduates can favourably compete with counterparts all over the world and motivate others to be adequately engaged with school programmes.

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