

Self Related Fail-Causes in Examination in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education: A Study of Benue State University, Makurdi

Nande Boniface Kwaghkar, Iorbee Michael Mlahaga & Nwokolo-Ojo Joy Obiageli

Department of Vocational and Technical Education

Benue State University, Makurdi

Email: bnande@bsum.edu.ng, miorbee@bsum.edu.ng,

obiagelinwokolo5@gmail.com.

Corresponding Author: Iorbee Michael Mlahaga

ABSTRACT

The study on Self Related Fail-Causes in Examination in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Benue State University, Makurdi was carried out to identify self related factors responsible for fail in examination. Three research questions were framed and answered while three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance for the study. A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was used to carry out the study. A population of sixty four (64) students was drawn from 200, 300 and 400 levels of the Department of Vocational and Technical Education respectively. Descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer the three research questions while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study include among others that students at times prepare for examination and sometimes students could be erratic and occasionally prepared for examination. Findings also indicate that sometimes students brood over the examination being awaited intermittently. It was concluded that the school setting embraces a test-conscious and examination-giving culture in which the lives of graduates are in part determined by their examination performance. The study also affirmed that examination performance is predetermined by human characteristics manifested in various forms such as fear, anxiety, stress and doubt about capabilities. Students are anxious as to what questions to see during examinations and expectations of their performance summed up as results. It was recommended that students should make adequate preparations for examination and employ all the tactics for preparation for examination before going in to take examinations.

Keywords: Fail-Causes and Examination

INTRODUCTION

Many Students do not know what examination entails. Most students are afraid of examinations, but examinations are very important today (Vidyaprakash, 2012). Students should understand that examiners are not out to fail them. The purpose of examination is to test the student's level of

understanding and knowledge of the subject or topic (Omisore, 2015). Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) Department, Benue State University, Makurdi conducts examinations at the end of every semester to determine the level of performance of learners and the learning outcomes for improvement of the learner and programme. Bhatia (2015) defined examination as a test which is conducted by schools, boards, colleges, universities and the like to assess the level of understanding of a person. Examinations are important because they compel students to learn; help to have some ideas about a learner's knowledge of certain subjects and how much learners know. Basically examinations are conducted to assess the understanding power of the student, how he or she is better than the rest, how he or she is different in his or her approach, what sets him or her apart from others, how can he or she be an asset to the organization and to the nation in general (Bhatia, 2015). Examinations are also necessary in schools and colleges to find out the real skills, talents and knowledge of the students (Vidyaprakash, 2012). Examination as a test therefore, is a form of assessment. In fact the school-based assessments within school nomenclature are composed of continuous assessment, end-of term and end-of-year examinations (Afemike and Omo-Egbekuse, 2015). Assessment is not just the rounding off of the teaching and learning period but to a large extent a central steering element in those processes and directly linked to learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003 and Cochran-Smith, 2001). Thus examination as assessment focuses on students' learning and developmental outcomes.

When taking examinations learners enjoy answering questions on what they know, though they feel sad if they are not successful in an examination, that is, when they score low under fail range of percentage or marks. Fail is a proof that a student is deficient or perform ineffectively or inadequately in examination. Fail in examination is a result of interplay between personal and environmental forces. Fail can be interpreted to be traceable within the personal forces and also drawn from environmental forces. Fail in Benue State University (BSU) refers to a score in percentage that is less than BSU minimum mark of forty-five percent (45%). According to Study and Exam (2015), a student fails or gets less mark in examination because he or she does not know all the factors or does not pay attention to all the factors which make a student get high grades in examination. Shanmugasundaram (2014) identified the following among other reasons for failures in the College/university examination to include misinterpretation of questions in the examination and reading only the selective portions of the subject. Some

other factors include poor mental approach towards study, irregular attendance to lectures, improper method of preparing for examinations, inappropriate examination taking tactics and strategies.

Most of the factors that lead to fail are intrinsic to student. In a study conducted by Cherif, Adams, Movahedzadeh, Martyn, and Dunning (2016), faculty members perceive student-related factors among the three main root-causes for students failing to rank first with sixty-eight percent (68%) of the responses. Hoyt (2015) pointed out some surefire ways to fail an examination to include lack of motivation, nervous energy, over-analyzing, thinking negatively, being overly confident, not reading instructions carefully, failure to prepare, showing up late, taking the examination on an empty stomach and pulling an all-nighter.

Fail of examination paints black future of examination taker in selection for any endeavor. This study therefore, seeks to identify the weakness that lead to fail to enhance the future undertaking of graduates particularly of Vocational and Technical Education Department of Benue State University, Makurdi.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students fail in examination they take with intention to pass. This is evident from the examination result spreadsheet of the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, BSU with a score profile that shows performance based on course content covered by the examination over the years from 2009 to 2015 that is not interesting. Many students have carryover and failed courses as shown in the remarks column of the result sheet, implying that they did not meet up the minimum percentage marks of 40 now 45 required passing the examination. Omisore (2016) opined that students who fail do not adopt the appropriate examination approaches that cause failure such as; not following the trend of examination papers; not reading “wide” or “deep” enough; not interpreting questions rightly and not articulating answers well among others. When students experience a bad examination at end of the semester, their hearts sink and they wonder “what just happened?”. The identification of the factors responsible for fail will lead to success in examination.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify self related factors responsible for fail of examination and remediation strategies to avoid same. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify how preparation is responsible for fail of examination
2. Find out the feelings responsible for fail while waiting to take examination
3. Find out the acts responsible for fail when taking examination

Research Questions

1. What preparation is responsible for fail of examination?
2. What feelings are responsible for fail while waiting for the examination?
3. What acts are responsible for fail when taking examination?

Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the programme on how preparation is responsible for fail of examination

H0₂: There is no significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the programme on feelings responsible for fail while waiting for examination

H0₃: There is no significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the programme on acts responsible for fail when taking examination

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. Sixty-four (64) students from 200 to 400 levels form the target population. These categories of students were used because they are conversant with the examination practices compared to 100 students who are freshers in the university system. A questionnaire of fifty (50) items structured based on three-point rating scale was used to collect data from students of vocational and technical education department. Three (3) research questions were framed and three null hypotheses were formulated. The research questions were answered using mean with cut-off point of two (2) while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What preparation is responsible for fail of examination?

Table 1
Mean responses of students on level of preparation for examination

| S/ N | Student's level of Preparation | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_0 | Remarks |
|---------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 2 | Do you enjoy attending lectures? | 2.85 | 2.67 | 2.92 | 2.79 | Yes |
| 3 | Do you wait until the last minute to complete assignments? | 1.56 | 1.79 | 2.38 | 1.81 | At times |
| 4 | Do you miss lectures in a semester? | 2.00 | 2.14 | 2.25 | 2.10 | At times |
| 5 | Do you pay adequate attention in the class? | 2.96 | 2.83 | 2.92 | 2.90 | Yes |
| 6 | Do you make notes when you are reading? | 2.44 | 2.58 | 2.77 | 2.56 | Yes |
| 7 | Do you cram your notes to pass examination? | 1.78 | 2.00 | 1.92 | 1.89 | At times |
| 8 | Do you wait for examination timetable to be out before you start reading your notes? | 1.19 | 1.42 | 1.42 | 1.32 | No |
| 9 | Do you jot down points during lectures? | 3.00 | 2.71 | 2.85 | 2.86 | Yes |
| 10 | Do you ponder over what you have been taught after lectures? | 2.52 | 2.25 | 2.54 | 2.42 | At times |
| 11 | Do you think through what you read? | 2.89 | 2.79 | 2.92 | 2.86 | Yes |
| 12 | Do you keep a number of friends as reading partners? | 2.15 | 1.86 | 2.55 | 2.11 | At times |
| 13 | Do you spend more time with friends than your book? | 1.30 | 1.21 | 1.38 | 1.28 | |
| 14 | Do you have divided attention since you do not know why you must go to school? | 1.16 | 1.29 | 1.38 | 1.26 | No |
| 15 | Do you stay awake reading throughout the night prior to examination? | 1.96 | 2.08 | 2.46 | 2.11 | At times |
| 16 | Do you always read some selected areas of your notes or examination? | 3.00 | 2.08 | 2.23 | 2.50 | Yes |
| 17 | Do you read your notes over and over before examination? | 2.63 | 2.56 | 2.77 | 2.63 | Yes |
| 18 | Do you depend on some of your friends to help you during examination? | 1.15 | 1.21 | 1.23 | 1.19 | No |
| 19 | Do you manage your time well when preparing for examination? | 2.93 | 2.78 | 2.85 | 2.86 | Yes |
| 20 | Do you engaged in other activities that eat into your reading time? | 1.56 | 1.79 | 1.85 | 1.70 | At times |
| 21 | Do you read wide enough for examination? | 2.70 | 2.91 | 2.61 | 2.76 | Yes |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 22 | Do you understand what you have read prior to examination? | 2.56 | 2.54 | 2.25 | 2.49 | At times |
| | Cluster Mean | 2.20 | 2.17 | 2.31 | 2.21 | At times |

Note: \bar{X}_1 , mean responses of 200 level students; \bar{X}_2 , mean responses of 300 level students

\bar{X}_{31} , mean responses of 400 level students; \bar{X}_0 is overall mean

Table 1 shows items 2, 5, 6, 9, 16, 17, 19 and 21 have their values within the range of 2.50 to 2.90 for “Yes”. Items 8, 14, and 18 comprise mean values that fall within the range 1.19 to 1.32 for “No”. The rest items 3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 15, 20, and 22 have mean values that lie between 1.70 and 2.49 representing “at times”. The overall mean value for each student level lies within “at times” range, which is an indication that students are erratic and occasionally prepare for examination.

Table 2

Analysis of variance for multiple comparisons of mean responses of different levels of students

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | Degree of Freedom | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remarks |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|------|------|---|
| Between Groups | 1.89 | 2 | 1.06 | 1.92 | 0.39 | Not reject the null hypothesis H0: Not Significant |
| Within Group | 39.84 | 59 | 0.63 | | | |
| Total | 40.42 | 61 | | | | |

Table 2 contains one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) summary. There is no statistically significant difference in mean responses of students across the three levels (200, 300 and 400) of the programme on how preparation is responsible for fail of examination as determined by one way ANOVA $F(2,61) = 1.92, p = 0.39$ that was not rejected. The probability value 0.39 associated with the F statistics is greater than 0.05, thus no significant difference was found. F-ratio calculated 1.92 at degrees of freedom between 2 and 61 at alpha level of 0.05 showed that there was no significant difference anywhere.

Research Question 2: What feelings are responsible for fail while waiting for the examination?

Table 3

Mean responses of students' feelings while waiting to take Examination

| S/N | Student's feelings while waiting to take Examination | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_0 | Remarks |
|---------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 23 | Do you feel less confident before taking the examination? | 1.78 | 1.88 | 1.42 | 1.75 | At times |
| 24 | Do you feel nervous to the extent that it affects your ability to recall? | 1.73 | 1.67 | 1.50 | 1.66 | At times |
| 25 | Do you feel worried over the kind of questions you may see such that it hinders your ability to retrieve easily what you learnt? | 1.81 | 1.96 | 2.00 | 1.91 | At times |
| 26 | Do you experience fear while waiting to take examination such that it interferes with your ability to recall? | 1.62 | 1.43 | 1.62 | 1.55 | At times |
| 27 | Do you doubt your ability to respond well to questions you will see? | 1.46 | 1.50 | 1.33 | 1.45 | No |
| Cluster Mean | | 1.68 | 1.69 | 1.58 | 1.66 | At times |

Table 3 shows that all the mean responses of respondents (items 23-27) range from 1.45 to 1.91 which indicates "at times" as their responses. The overall mean value for each programme level is within "at times" range for responses on while waiting to take examination. This could be interpreted to mean that the students brood over the examination being awaited intermittently.

Table 4

ANOVA for multiple comparisons of mean responses of different levels of students on while waiting for examination

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | Degree of Freedom | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remarks |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------------------------|
| Between Groups | 0.65 | 2 | 0.33 | 0.58 | 0.60 | Not reject the null hypothesis |
| Within Groups | 31.34 | 60 | 0.53 | | | H0 ₂ : Not Significant |
| Total | 31.99 | 62 | | | | |

Table 4 contains ANOVA summary. There was no significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the programme on feelings responsible for fail while waiting for examination was not rejected. The probability value 0.60 associated with the F statistics is greater than 0.05; no significant difference was found. F-ratio calculated 0.58 at degrees of freedom between 2 and 61 at alpha level of 0.05 showed that there was no statistically significant difference.

Research Question 3: What acts are responsible for fail when taking examination?

Table 5
Mean responses of students on acts when taking Examination

| S/No | Student's acts when taking Examination | \bar{X}_1 | \bar{X}_2 | \bar{X}_3 | \bar{X}_0 | Remarks |
|------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 28 | Do you lose interest in the course of writing examination? | 1.27 | 1.43 | 1.23 | 1.32 | No |
| 29 | Do you feel demoralized when you cannot answer each attempted questions completely | 2.28 | 1.96 | 2.00 | 2.10 | At times |
| 30 | Do you fall sick in examination hall? | 1.19 | 1.42 | 1.25 | 1.29 | No |
| 31 | Do you follow examination instructions in answering questions? | 2.92 | 2.82 | 2.85 | 2.87 | Yes |
| 32 | Do you rely only on your ability in the course of taking examination? | 2.56 | 2.25 | 2.69 | 2.47 | At times |
| 33 | Do you lack confidence to answer questions? | 1.31 | 1.61 | 1.25 | 1.41 | No |
| 34 | Do you feel easily irritated by presence of invigilators? | 1.24 | 1.58 | 1.38 | 1.40 | No |
| 35 | Do you not read the instructions carefully? | 1.36 | 1.42 | 1.27 | 1.37 | No |
| 36 | Do you understand the meaning of the instructions properly? | 2.73 | 2.75 | 2.64 | 2.72 | Yes |
| 37 | Do you come to examination hall late? | 1.20 | 1.50 | 1.54 | 1.39 | No |
| 38 | Do you have psychological trauma due to past events? | 1.46 | 1.63 | 1.31 | 1.49 | No |
| 39 | Do you forget what you read easily? | 1.65 | 1.58 | 1.67 | 1.63 | At times |
| 40 | Do you do not understand the questions clearly? | 1.58 | 1.75 | 1.77 | 1.68 | At times |
| 41 | Do you lose concentration in the course of writing examination? | 1.23 | 1.54 | 1.58 | 1.42 | No |
| 42 | Do you make noise in examination hall? | 1.08 | 1.25 | 1.23 | 1.17 | No |
| 43 | Do you share ideas during examination? | 1.62 | 1.42 | 1.62 | 1.54 | At times |
| 44 | Do you answer question(s) off point? | 1.35 | 1.35 | 1.46 | 1.37 | No |
| 45 | Do you not present your answers in a very neat manner? | 1.54 | 1.75 | 1.54 | 1.62 | At times |
| 46 | Are you overly confident? | 1.58 | 2.09 | 2.00 | 1.85 | At times |
| 47 | Do you feel questions were unevenly spread on content target? | 1.62 | 1.57 | 1.75 | 1.62 | At times |
| 48 | Do you write so slow that you run out of time? | 1.19 | 1.43 | 1.62 | 1.37 | No |
| 49 | Do you not present your answers on answer sheet clearly? | 1.27 | 1.65 | 1.33 | 1.43 | No |

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|----|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 50 | Do you not read the instructions of examination papers carefully? | 1.08 | 1.61 | 1.31 | 1.32 | No |
| 51 | Do you not interpret questions rightly? | 1.42 | 1.61 | 1.38 | 1.48 | No |
| 52 | Do you not articulate answers well? | 1.46 | 1.78 | 1.67 | 1.62 | At times |
| 53 | Do you come to examination hall with an empty stomach? | 1.77 | 2.35 | 2.31 | 2.10 | At times |
| 54 | Do you feel too nervous to control your ability? | 1.31 | 1.96 | 1.58 | 1.61 | At times |
| 55 | Do you believe you will fail the examination? | 1.15 | 1.13 | 1.23 | 1.16 | No |
| 56 | Do you not manage your examination time well? | 1.42 | 1.87 | 1.77 | 1.66 | At times |
| | Cluster mean | 1.55 | 1.73 | 1.66 | 1.64 | At times |

Table 5 shows that out of the 29 items presented as students' acts while taking examination (items 28-56) only items 31 and 36 were accepted by the students. Students disagreed with items 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, and 55, and accepted that at times items 29, 32, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 47, 52, 53, 54 and 56 are their acts when taking examination.

Table 6

ANOVA for multiple comparisons of mean responses of different levels of students when taking examination

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | Degree of Freedom | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Remarks |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|------|------|---|
| Between Groups | 1.37 | 2 | 0.68 | 1.34 | 0.42 | Not reject the null hypothesis H0 ₃ : Not Significant |
| Within Group | 26.88 | 59 | 0.47 | | | |
| Total | 28.25 | 61 | | | | |

Table 6 contains one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) summary that shows no statistically significant difference in mean responses of students across the three levels (200, 300 and 400) of the programme on when taking examination as determined by one way ANOVA $F(2,61) = 1.34$, $p = 0.42$ that was not rejected. The probability value 0.42 associated with the F statistics is greater than 0.05, which implies there is a significant difference. F-ratio calculated 1.34 at degrees of freedom between 2 and 61 at alpha level of 0.05 showed that there was no source of significant difference.

DISCUSSION

Findings regarding the level of preparation for examination show that: Students at times prepared for examination; and at times did not prepare for

examination. This is reminiscent of Yeoh's (2014) observation, when Biology/ health sciences students were asked if they studied, they said, 'A bit'. They needed to be diligent to understand more than a bit. They did not prepare consistently or regularly for examination. Auromeera (2015) advised that students should not make mistake of resting up before finals; this is the time to push hard. Waiting to study until the night before examination is disastrous. Students accepted that they do engage in other activities that eat into their reading time at times. The level of preparation for examination is inadequate; all students involved in the study by their responses were not consistent and committed to academics studies. There was no statistically significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the Vocational and Technical Education Department Programme, hence $0.05 < p = 0.39$. Students of 200, 300 and 400 levels had same level of acceptability concerning preparation for examination.

Findings on the feelings responsible for students' fail while waiting to take examination indicates that: Students at times feel less confident before taking the examination; feel nervous to the extent that it affects their abilities to recall; feel worried over the kind of questions they may see such that it hinders their abilities to retrieve easily what they learnt. This finding is consistent with Chohan (2017), who stated that students experience fear while waiting to take examination such that it interferes with their abilities to recall; and doubt their abilities to respond well to questions they will see. Doubt can overwhelm anyone who encounters a difficult examination. Feeling worried, nervous and of fear are indices of anxiety or stress. VTE students found examination stressful. Stress in this context refers to an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that students experience during examinations that they perceive as threatening to their success. Some people might feel shaky, sweaty, or feel their heart beating quickly as they wait for the test to be given out (Kids Health, 2017). According to Pennsylvania State University (2015), it is normal to feel nervous about an examination. The author observed that a little tension can give just the right amount of adrenaline needed to do the best. In fact it is general stress that helps motivate to succeed (Pennsylvania State University, 2015). Also there was no statistically significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the Vocational and Technical Education Department Programme, hence $0.05 < p = 0.60$. Students of 200, 300 and 400 levels had same level of acceptability with respect to while waiting for examination.

Findings on students' acts when taking examination shows that: every student accepts that he or she usually followed the given instructions on how to answer the questions. Students for instance, disagreed that they never lose interest in the course of writing examination; but gladly accepts that at times, they feel demoralized when they cannot answer each attempted questions completely, forget what they had learnt and at times do not even understand the question clearly among others. This finding is consistent with Cohan's (2017) claim that examination time can be a whirlwind of unpredictable emotions. In fact, it is unusual to find a student who doesn't approach a big test without a degree of anxiety. People often experience a general state of worry or fear before confronting something challenging such as a test, examination, recital, or interview (Crosta, 2015). Students did come to examination hall on time and read instructions carefully. When taking a test, they might feel "butterflies," a stomachache, or a tension headache (Kids Health, 2017). Sometimes a task can be felt so overwhelming that it's difficult to begin, says Amber Regis, lecturer in 19th century literature at the University of Sheffield (Shaw, 2013). Students' performances during examination could be determined by stress or anxiety. Performance anxiety is when a person feels worried about how he/she will perform or do on something, especially when it's really important (Kids Health, 2017). There was no statistically significant difference in mean responses of students across levels of the Vocational and Technical Education Department Programme concerning while taking examination.

CONCLUSION

A school environment embraces a test-conscious and examination-giving culture in which the lives of graduates are in part determined by their examination performance and examination. Examination performance is defined by Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the learner and is predetermined by human characteristics manifested in various forms such as fear, anxiety, stress and doubt about capabilities. Students are anxious as to what questions to see during examinations and expectations of their performance summed up as results. Subsequently, students fail to prepare for their examination; the most common being not studying all together. They wait for final day to crash in, which is shown by their final results after examination. A critical review of factors responsible for students' fail in all types of examination will enhance students' performance in subsequent examinations in the University as elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATION

Student should make adequate preparation for examination. Preparation for examination is not a task of day or two; it needs daily study and should employ all the tactics for preparation for examination; Students should have knowledge of examination techniques, how to plan, prepare for and write examination in way that brings huge success; Students should not allow behavior-induced causation, which is attention deficit disorder and cognitively-induced causation, wrong thinking to take control of their lives during examination; Examination should be seen as means to an end. Success in examination is foundation to life. Students should work hard to pass examination; Students should think that remembering learnt materials alone is insufficient. They should take the trouble to understand learnt materials properly.

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