

A Review of the Enrolment and Performance of Male and Female Students in Education / Economics Programme of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to review the pattern of enrolment into and performance pattern of male and female students on the Education/Economics Programme of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Data were collected from the record (in the Department) of students into the programme from 1999/2000 session to 2002/2003 session. The record of performance of male and female students on the programme were obtained from the students' record as kept in the computer programme designed for results processing (known as the ISIS). It was discovered that there are more males than female students on the programme and male students performed better than their female counterparts. Recommendations on how female enrolment and performance could be enhanced were raised.

INTRODUCTION

A number of authors in the recent past (e.g. Davies, 1999; Okebukola, 1999, 2002 and Makhubu, 2003) have discussed the male - female issue in higher education. The focus of discussion ranges from student enrolment by university and discipline to situation in higher education as regards male and female representation. Most of these authors agreed that the female gender has not been adequately represented in a number of areas (courses) either as students or as members of staff. It has also been reported in the past that the female learner does not perform as brilliantly as the male child does in the subjects or courses that are quantitative in orientation. It is common knowledge that more males than female students earn first class and upper second class honours degrees in our Universities especially in the Engineering courses. In the other way round, it was believed by a number of authors (e.g. Crowl et al., 1997) that the female students perform better in the arts or language - related courses.

In the case of Economics as a course in the University, a reasonable degree of mathematical/quantitative ability is required for good performance. This is evident in the Universities Matriculation Examinations (UME) brochure

(published by Nigeria's Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board - JAMB) where Mathematics is made a compulsory UME subject. In the same manner, the curriculum content of the course (as contained in the approved programme for undergraduate Economics by the National Universities Commission [NUC] in Nigeria) shows that quantitative courses feature in the course listings for every semester. Without any doubt, any candidate with poor background in Mathematics could be considered as lacking the needed cognitive strength for successful performance in the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree programme in Economics.

Performance has been described by a number of Psychologists and Tests & Measurement experts (e.g. Crowl et al., 1997; Adewolu, 1998; Popham, 2002). The concept in this context refers to the extent of demonstrated ability in school subjects as observable in the results of semester/sessional examinations of the students. In the Faculty of Education Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) the duration for Education/Economics programme is four years for those admitted through the UME (secondary school leavers) and three years for students admitted by Direct-Entry (i.e. holders of the Nigeria Certificate in Education - NCE or General Certificate of Education - GCE [Advanced

Level)). There is no difference in the admission requirements for the course between males and females. Over the years, no attempt has been made to examine the performance of students in this teacher-education programme on the basis of sex/gender. Again, it is not certain whether the quantitative nature of Economics has led to differences in the performance of the male and female students on the programme.

The objectives of this study therefore are to:

- (a) Review the trend of male and female enrolment into the B.Sc. Education/Economics Programme at OAU, Ile-Ife in the last four sessions and;
- (b) Carry out an analysis of male and female performance on the programme in the last two semesters.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is ex-post facto in design as the behaviours to be observed had been exhibited prior to this time. All the registered Economics students for the 2002/2003 session in the Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, Faculty of Education, OAU, Ile-Ife make the population for the study. The record of enrolment to the programme was obtained from the administrative office of the Department while the performance record was obtained from the Ife Students Information System (ISIS) record; a computer programme being used for the computation and safe-keeping of students' results in OAU. Judgement of performance is based on the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the students. This ranges from 0 to 5 where 0 – 0.99 Fail (could mean probation or withdrawal); 1.00 – 1.49 is Pass; 1.50 – 2.39 is 3rd Class; 2.40 – 3.49 is Second Class Lower Division; 3.50 – 4.49 is Second Class Upper Division and 4.50 – 5.00 is First Class.

RESULTS

The Table 1 shows the total student enrol-

ment figure into the B.Sc Education/Economics Programme in the last four sessions.

The result in Table 1 revealed that male students are in majority across the Parts (I – IV) for the three sessions being examined. For the current session male students on Education/Economics Programme (314) represent 54.70% of total students. The figure for female for the same period is 260, which represents 45.30% of total enrolment. In the same vein, male students outnumber their female counterparts for 2001/2002 and 1999/2000 sessions. In fact, the figures male and female students are 294 (64.19%) and 164 (35.81%) respectively for 2001/2002; and 273 (59.61%) and 185 (40.39%) respectively for 1999/2000 session.

Looking at the total figures of male/female enrolment for the three sessions, one could see that the male students outnumber female across the four levels.

Looking at Tables 2 and 3, it is evident that the number of male students almost doubles that of their female counterparts for each of the first three classes of performance (i.e. First Class, Second Class Upper and Second Class Lower Divisions). The situation however changed for those on Third Class, Pass and Fail Classes as the proportion of female students outnumbers males at these three levels. These results showed that male students have demonstrated greater academic ability in the Education/Economics programme at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

The result in Tables 2 and 3 have reflected a performance trend in which male students have upper hand in performance. The number of males also outnumbers their female colleagues on the programme. Let us consider graduation from the programme in the recent past for 1999/2000; 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 sessions as presented in Table 4.

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Table 1: Enrolment in B.Sc. education/economics by sex, 1999-2003

Session	Part i		Part ii		Part iii		Part iv		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2002/2003	92	82	49	53	92	63	81	62	314(54.70%)	260(45.30%)
2001/2002	63	56	87	42	48	46	96	20	294(64.19%)	164(35.81%)
1999/2000*	77	54	92	64	37	15	67	52	273(59.61%)	185(40.39%)
Total	232	192	228	159	177	124	244	134	881	609
(%)	54.71	45.28	58.91	41.09	58.8	4.2	64.55	35.45	59.13	40.87

*There was no 2000/2001 Session, it was cancelled.

Table 2: Academic performance of students by level and CGPA (2002/2003 session)

Session	Part i		Part ii		Part iii		Part iv		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
First Class 4.50 – 5.00	4	1	3	-	-	2	-	-	7	3
Second Class Upper Division 3.50 – 4.49	11	5	6	5	21	13	9	6	47	29
Second Class Lower Division 2.50 – 3.49	47	23	14	13	40	16	36	11	137	63
Third Class 1.50 – 2.49	13	17	16	12	18	19	15	33	62	81
Pass: 1.00 – 1.49	14	33	6	17	11	9	14	6	45	65
0.0.99 (Probation)	3	1	3	4	2	3	6	4	14	12
0.0.99 (Withdrawal)	-	2	1	2	-	1	1	2	2	7
Total	92	82	49	53	92	63	81	62	314	260

Table 3: Performance of male and female students by class of degree (2002/2003 session)

Class of degree	Male	Female	Total
1	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10 (1.74%)
21	47 (61.84%)	29 (38.16%)	76 (13.24%)
22	137 (68.50%)	63 (31.50%)	200 (34.84%)
3	62 (43.36%)	81 (50.90%)	143 (24.91%)
*Pass	45 (40.91%)	65 (59.09%)	110 (19.16%)
Fail*	16 (45.71%)	19 (54.29%)	35 (16.10%)
Total			574

*The figure for probation and withdrawal have been combined and classified as fail.

Table 4: Graduation figures by class of degree and sex for three sessions

Class of degrees	2002/2003		2001/2002		1999/2000	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
First Class	-	-	-	-	*N.A	N.A
Second Class (Upper)	-	-	4	-	N.A	N.A
Second Class (Lower)	5	2	8	7	N.A	N.A
Third Class	5	2	8	4	N.A	N.A
Pass	-	-	-	1	N.A	N.A
Total	10	4	20	12	N.A	N.A

three classes of performance (i.e. First Class, Second Class Upper and Second Class Lower Divisions). The situation however changed for Third Class, Pass and Fail Classes as the proportion of female students outnumbers males at these three levels. These results showed that male students have demonstrated greater academic ability in the Education/Economics programme at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

DISCUSSION

Just as it was mentioned in the early part of

this work that male students are more in number in the quantitative related courses; it has also been revealed here that the trend remained the same for the Education/Economic programme at OAU. For the three year period considered for enrolment, the ratio of male to female students is almost 6:4 and this is not different from what has been reported by Davies (1999) and Okebukola (1999, 2002) that Science/Mathematics related courses or disciplines are 'arid zones' so to say, for females. Male students are greater in number in these disciplines than their female colleagues.

In the aspect of performance, the result showed that males have dominated in the

performance chart of the programme over the years. Interactions (by the authors) with the most senior members of staff (teaching) in the department revealed that there has not been a time in the history of the programme when any female student graduated with a First Class degree in Education/Economics. This could not mean that the feat is unattainable by female students but, it is only that male students tend to obtain higher grade than females in most quantitative related courses of which Economics is one. The result agrees to the submissions of Okebukola (2002) that the total female enrolment in Nigerian University as at the beginning of the 2001/2002 session is 34%. When compared with the result for the same period in this study, female enrolment in B.Sc. Education/Economics programme is 35.81%. The closeness of the two figures could be a product of some of the factors raised by Okebukola (as those responsible for the gender gap in education) such as those that are curriculum related; instructional related and those relating to the administrative system in our institutions. Davies (1999) listed some factors - such as the use of language to transmit negative messages against the female students; being partial to male learners, confirming high expectations by verbal and non verbal means etc. - that tend to put male learners at advantage over their female counterparts. All these could be responsible for the concentration of the female students at the lower level of the performance scale (Class of the Degree).

CONCLUSION

It is hereby concluded that male students outnumber their female counterparts in enrolment into the B.Sc. Education/Economics Programme and the male students perform better than the female students across the levels (Parts I - IV)

especially for the sessions considered in this study.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the cut-off points for admission into the programme (whether through UME or Direct Entry) be made lower for females as suggested by Mlamal (1998) so that more female students could be enrolled into the programme.

It is also recommended that further investigations be carried out on reasons why the male students on the programme perform better than their female counterparts.

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