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Research

Workload Management Strategies and Lecturers' Effectiveness in Examination Processing in Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to find out whether workload management strategies can predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Three specific objectives were stated. Three research questions and null hypotheses guided the study. An ex-post facto research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study was 2948 lecturers in the three public universities in the state. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 295 respondents representing 10 percent of the study population. Two instruments titled " Workload Management Strategies Questionnaire (WMSQ)" and " Lecturers' Effectiveness in Examinations Processing Questionnaire (LEEPQ)" were used to collect data. The instruments were validated by two experts. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. Simple regression was used in the analysis. The results revealed that workload management strategies predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing significantly. Based on the result, it was recommended that all examinations should be digitalized to reduce lecturers' workload and improve their effectiveness in examination processing, among others.

Keywords: Workload Management strategies, lecturers' effectiveness, examination processing.

Introduction

Lecturers are arguably the most important staff members in the university system. This is because they perform the most critical functions of universities, including teaching, research, and community service. The success of the universities depends to a large extent on the lecturers and on the effectiveness with which they carry out their duties. Effectiveness is a measure of how well and successfully a task is carried out to achieve the

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stated goals of education. It means competence demonstrated in accomplishing a given task successfully. Lecturers' effectiveness, therefore, refers to the competence of lecturers in carrying out their duties and helping their schools in achieving the goals of education. Abosede and Etuk (2016) stated that a lecturer can be said to be effective when he or she can successfully impart knowledge, be proficient in research, and contribute to societal development. Lecturers' effectiveness refers to the degree to which lecturers are able to achieve objectives, as measured by various indicators such as teaching, research, and community service. It is also a measure of how successfully lecturers fulfil their duties in teaching, research, publication, community service, and administrative tasks (Udey, 2020). Among the functions of lecturers, teaching is considered very important because it is through teaching that skills and knowledge are imparted to the learners. Through teaching, lecturers educate and prepare students who later become skilled professionals, innovators, and leaders in different fields.

One of the most important aspects of teaching is examination processing. Examination processing in universities involves the systematic planning, conduct, and oversight of assessments to ensure academic integrity and fairness in students' performance evaluation. The process of examination includes the setting of examination questions, making available examination materials, invigilation, marking of scripts, results processing, and submission. The purpose of examination is to assess, evaluate, or measure the performance of students to determine if what has been taught has been mastered by the students. In other words, examinations are used to measure the learning outcomes of students. Oladebinu, Amos, and Oyediran (2018) noted that examinations are the most viable instrument for measuring students' academic performance. Similarly, Hay, Wright, and Allen (2016) disclosed that good examination and continuous assessment grades are indicators of academic achievement. This means that when a student has good grades in examinations, he or she will achieve success in his or her academics.

Examinations are not only for providing feedback for the teacher to ascertain the level of knowledge acquisition but also serve as a measure of knowledge retention by the students (Onyibe, Uma, & Ibima, cited in Egbebi, Adeniyi, & Oyekan, 2023). On their part, Egbebi, Adeniyi, and Oyekan (2023) stated that examinations are considered the basis for promotion to a higher class, a source of motivation for learners to gain promotion for additional studies, and a basis for prediction about students' future education and job aptitude. Examinations are an essential feature of every educational system because they

provide the structure for teaching and learning, and the overall success of the educational system is evaluated based on the examination's aims and efficacy. The importance of examinations in the university system cannot be overstated; as such, they are used to evaluate students' performance and determine if they attain the obligatory scholastic learning and knowledge standards (Ekundayo, Bamikolo, & Afolabi, 2023).

However, one of the problems affecting some universities in Nigeria, and in Cross River State in particular, is poor processing of examinations. There have been complaints of irregularities in examination processing by some lecturers, such as late arrival of examination materials, poor management of examination halls, poor marking of scripts, poor grading, discrepancies in results compilation, issues of missing scripts, poor processing of results, omission of results, and delay in the release of results, among others. As observed by Petters and Okon, cited in Egbebi, Adeniyi, and Oyekan (2023), most examinations are marked by complaints of various forms of malpractice, and in most of these examinations, cheating is a recurrent event, especially in written types of examination. These anomalies in examination processing undermine the integrity of examinations and sometimes lead to the failure of some brilliant students. Students' results are generally not a true reflection of their knowledge and capabilities to a great extent, and in many cases, they are a show of shame due to malpractice of various degrees (Egbebi, Adeniyi, & Oyekan, 2023).

Students' failure as a result of poor processing of examinations often leads to repetition of courses, which may attract extra costs to the students and the school. In line with this, Eteng (2018) noted that when a student repeats a course or class, he or she takes up space, teaching time, and other resources that could have been devoted to other students. Archibong (2025) also observed that delays in marking and submission of results prolong graduation timelines for students, thereby causing frustration and financial strain on the students. If examinations are not conducted correctly and the outcomes are not shared precisely, the projected feedback may not yield the desired consequences (Ekundayo, Bamikolo, & Afolabi, 2023). According to these authors, no matter how ambitious, admirable, laudable, or expansive the educational goals are, or how well the school curriculum is designed, if no provision is made for accurate evaluation and reporting of learning achievements, these efforts will be in vain.

Lecturers' ineffectiveness in examination processing can be attributed to the heavy workload. Osifila and Aladetan (2020) refer to workload as the quantity and intensity of job

assignments. Higher demand for university education has resulted in increased university enrolment, with managers admitting students far above the stipulated number approved by the National Universities Commission without a corresponding increase in manpower, thereby increasing the workload of lecturers in teaching and administration of examinations. For instance, there are courses offered by more than eight hundred students, and in this case, the process of administering examinations, such as the processing of examination materials, allocation of examination halls, invigilation, marking of scripts, and processing of results, is always hindered by irregularities, which ultimately undermine the integrity of the examination. Osifila and Aladetan (2020) noted that areas of workload, such as marking of examination scripts, processing of results, supervision of students' research work, and teaching of courses, are observed to be more taxing for lecturers. More often, additional work tends to enlarge the workload of lecturers and make the work excessive. The resultant effect of excess workload is the accompanying stress with its attendant health problems. When there is a normal workload, there is a tendency that a worker would achieve, but when the workload is much or excessive, there is a likelihood that the worker may not perform well (Aminullahi & Olojuola, 2021). According to the authors, one thing is to work, and the other is to achieve effectiveness in such work. Many researchers have admonished school managers to develop strategies for managing workload to enhance lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Aminullahi and Olojuola (2021) are of the opinion that a lot has to be done to manage the problem of workload in the university system so that lecturers can work and live to work another day. Workload management means the process of making efforts to minimise the workload of an employee to enhance job effectiveness. It is a way of making the work of an employee less cumbersome by reducing job descriptions or improving the capacity of the employees. As a means of improving lecturers' effectiveness, many school managers have developed strategies to manage staff workload, including digitalisation of examinations, staff capacity building, and collaborative teaching.

Digitalisation of examinations refers to the use of modern digital technologies in processing examinations. Digitalisation of examinations in universities is a way of managing lecturers' workload, improving their effectiveness, and aligning with international best practices. Processing examinations electronically appears to be faster, easier, more reliable, and more effective than traditional paper-based examinations. With the increasing student population in the university system, digital examinations remain an effective

solution for conducting mass examinations. The major reason for digital examinations is to minimise examination misconduct and also facilitate the processing of results. Abubakar and Adebayo (2014) report that some of the major reasons for introducing computer-based examinations were to inhibit the rate of examination misconduct and also to speed up the release of results. The system is designed to facilitate examination processes and manage challenges confronting the processing of examinations, auto submission, auto marking, and auto result processing and reporting. Usman, Iqbal, Iqbal, Chaudhry, Farhan, and Ashraf (2017) noted that computer-based examinations are becoming increasingly acceptable due to the affordability of computer systems by most schools, which has greatly made it possible for institutions to process examinations electronically.

Capacity building is a workload management strategy that focuses on capacitating lecturers to handle tasks effectively. It involves training, mentoring, and skills development to enhance lecturers' capabilities to handle higher volumes or difficult tasks. According to Udofot (2005), capacity building is a conscious and proactive effort used by employers that seeks to capacitate employees to give their best to the organisation. Capacity building helps employees in a conscious and planned way to acquire the capabilities required to perform their duties effectively (Mamoria & Ganker, 2010). Agbonna, Akeju, Yakubu, and Fasola (2022), in their study of capacity building as a correlate of lecturers' job performance in state-owned universities in South West Nigeria, report that there was a composite significant contribution of capacity building programmes on lecturers' job performance. Similarly, Olobia, Asiyai, and Akporehe (2025), in their study of the influence of capacity building on lecturers' job productivity in universities in Delta and Edo States of Nigeria, revealed that capacity building has a significant influence on lecturers' job productivity.

Another strategy employed by university managers to manage lecturers' workload is collaborative teaching. It is a joint teaching effort of two or more lecturers of a particular course. Collaborative teaching facilitates instructional and evaluation processes. Rahmawati, Koul, and Fischer (2015) noted that when teachers co-teach, they are jointly responsible for differentiating instruction, assessing students' achievement, and maintaining classroom climate, which provides a greater array of dynamic structures. The shared planning time, the opportunity to examine and discuss students' learning, teaching methods, curriculum content, and classroom management approaches, and the self-reflection that results from collaborative teaching can increase teachers' knowledge and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Bassey (2025) carried out a study titled "Quality Assurance

Indicators and Teachers' Job Effectiveness in Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria," and reported that collaborative teaching, as a quality assurance indicator, predicts lecturers' job effectiveness significantly.

Judging from the background of the study, it can be deduced that workload management strategies have a connection with lecturers' effectiveness. Hence, the thrust of this study was to find out whether workload management strategies predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing in public universities in Cross River State.

Statement of the problem

Examinations remain the most viable tool for measuring students' academic performance in universities. It is through the results of the examinations that parents know the performance of their children in school. To this end, the government and school managers usually attach importance to examinations in schools by ensuring adequate provision of facilities and examination materials for fair and hitch-free examinations. Unfortunately, it has been observed that many lecturers who are saddled with the responsibilities of processing examinations are usually not effective in carrying out these tasks, as most examinations are often marred by complaints of irregularities such as late arrival of examination materials, poor invigilation, poor management of examination halls, poor marking of scripts, missing examination scripts, leakage of examination scripts, poor results processing, and late release of results, among others, thus undermining the integrity of examinations.

While the management of universities blamed lecturers' ineffectiveness in examination processing, lecturers blamed the poor processing of examinations on heavy workloads. In an attempt to address this, many school managers have developed strategies for managing workload in the university system to improve lecturers' effectiveness. Therefore, the problem of the study lies in whether workload management strategies could predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

i) How does the digitalisation of examinations predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing?

ii) To what extent does staff capacity building predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing?

iii) How does collaborative teaching predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing?

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated.

i) Digitalisation of examinations does not significantly predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing.

ii) Staff capacity building does not significantly predict lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing.

iii) Collaborative teaching does not significantly predict lecturers' effectiveness in examinations.

Method

The study adopted a survey research design. The choice of this design was to enable the researcher to collect opinions from a cross-section of the population for the study and generalise the results of the study to the entire population. The study was carried out in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The universities include the University of Calabar, the University of Cross River State, and the University of Education and Entrepreneurship. The University of Calabar is a federal government university located in the heart of Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State. The University of Cross River State and the University of Education and Entrepreneurship are state universities owned by Cross River State. The population of the study comprised 2,948 lecturers in the three universities. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 295 lecturers as respondents for the study. The sample size represents 10 per cent of the study population, which is considered adequate for use in the study.

Two sets of instruments titled "Workload Management Strategies Questionnaire (WMSQ)" and "Lecturers' Effectiveness in Examination Processing Questionnaire (LEEEQ)" were constructed, validated by two experts, and used to collect data. Reliability of the instruments was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha method. The coefficients for WMSQ ranged from 0.68 to 0.76, while the coefficients for LEEEQ ranged from 0.72 to 0.76. Data were personally obtained by the researcher and analysed using simple linear regression.

Result

Table 1

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the prediction of digitalization of examinations on lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing (N=295)

Model	R	R^2		Adj. R^2	Std Err Estimate
1	.839a	.703		.702	2.56292
	ANOVA				
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	4561.443	1	4561.443	694.435	.000[b]
Residual	1924.590	293	6.569		
Total	6486.034	294			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std.Err	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	3.078	.564		5.454	.000
digitalization of examinations	.848	.032	.839	26.352	.000

a. Dependent Variable: lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing

***Significant, p< 0.05**

The R-value of 0.839 indicates a high positive correlation between the digitalisation of examinations and lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Moreover, the R2 value is 0.703. This means that the digitalisation of examinations can explain 70.3% of the variance in lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Therefore, the remaining 29.7% of the variance is due to other factors not included in this model. In addition, the p-value for the digitalisation of examinations is 0.000. Therefore, since the p-value (0.000) is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, this means that the model is statistically significant. This indicates that the digitalisation of examinations significantly predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing.

Table 2

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the prediction of staff capacity building on lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing (N=295)

Model	R	R^2		Adj. R^2	Std Err Estimate
1	.751a	.564		.563	3.10671
	ANOVA				
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	3658.107	1	3658.107	379.015	.000[b]
Residual	2827.927	293	9.652		
Total	6486.034	294			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std.Err	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	2.246	.800		2.807	.005
staff capacity building	.823	.042	.751	19.468	.000

a. Dependent Variable: lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing

***Significant, p< 0.05**

The R-value of .751 indicates a high positive correlation between staff capacity building and lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Moreover, the R2 value is 0.564. This means that staff capacity building can explain 56.4% of the variance in lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Therefore, the remaining 43.6% of the variance is due to other factors not included in this model. In addition, the p-value for digitalisation of examinations is 0.000. Therefore, since the p-value (0.000) is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, this means that the model is statistically significant. This indicates that staff capacity building significantly predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing.

Table 3

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of the prediction of collaborative teaching on lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing (N=295)

Model	R	R^2		Adj. R^2	Std Err Estimate
1	.371a	.138		.135	4.36828
	ANOVA				
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	895.052	1	895.052	46.906	.000[b]
Residual	5590.981	293	19.082		
Total	6486.034	294			
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std.Err	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	6.896	1.558		4.426	.000
collaborative teaching	.520	.076	.371	6.849	.000

a. Dependent Variable: lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing

***Significant, p< 0.05**

The R-value of 0.371 indicates a high positive correlation between collaborative teaching and lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Moreover, the R2 value is 0.138. This means that collaborative teaching can explain 13.8% of the variance in lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. Therefore, the remaining 86.2% of the variance is due to other factors not included in this model. In addition, the p-value for collaborative teaching is 0.000. Therefore, since the p-value (0.000) is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, this means that the model is statistically significant. This indicates that collaborative teaching significantly predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing.

Discussion

Hypothesis one:

The result of hypothesis one revealed that the digitalisation of the examination process predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing significantly. This result indicated that when the examination is digitalised using modern digital technologies, it will

make the process of examinations, including the setting of questions, invigilation, marking of scripts, result processing, and reporting, simple, easier, faster, and reduce workload, thereby making lecturers effective in delivering the job. This result aligned with the report of Abubakar and Adebayo (2014), who report that some of the reasons for computer-based examinations were to inhibit the rate of examination misconduct and also to speed up the release of results.

Hypothesis two:

Results of hypothesis two revealed that staff capacity building significantly predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. This result implies that undergoing capacity building through training, mentoring, and skills development will enhance their effectiveness in handling examinations that have a large number of students without burnout. The result corroborates the findings of Olobia, Asiyai, and Akporehe (2022), who report that capacity building has a significant influence on lecturers' job productivity. Similarly, the result aligns with the findings of Agbonna et al. (2022), who report that there was a composite significant contribution of capacity building programmes to lecturers' job performance.

Hypothesis three:

Results of hypothesis three revealed that collaborative teaching significantly predicts lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing. This result implies that when two or more lecturers co-teach a particular course, there is a likelihood that the workload will be reduced and effectiveness will improve since the course contents will be shared among them to teach. During examination, the setting of questions, invigilation, marking of scripts, and processing of results will be jointly carried out among the lecturers, thereby reducing their workload and improving effectiveness. The result is in line with the findings of Bassey (2025), who revealed that collaborative teaching, as a quality assurance indicator, predicts lecturers' job effectiveness significantly. The result also agrees with the submission of Darling-Hammond (2013) that collaborative teaching can increase teachers' knowledge and effectiveness.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that digitalisation of examinations, staff capacity building, and collaborative teaching are workload management strategies that can be used to improve lecturers' effectiveness in examination processing in universities.

Recommendations

i) All examinations in universities should be digitalised to reduce lecturers' workload and improve their effectiveness in examination processing.

ii) Government and university managers should endeavour to make provision for capacity building programmes to make lecturers effective in handling high volume and more difficult tasks without burnout.

iii) Collaborative teaching should be well embraced in universities as a means of managing lecturers' workload and improving their effectiveness in examination processing.

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