

DEVELOPING POSSIBLE STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IMPROVEMENT OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN NIGERIA A STUDY OF KWARA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This paper focuses on developing possible strategies for improving the academic achievement of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) students in Nigeria. The main purpose is to generate a close match between the degree awards of graduating students and the HTM employment available in the country. This participatory action research and survey feedback study was conducted between 2014 and 2018, employing a mixed method approach, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data are presented using bar charts, with the free PSPP statistical analysis software tool being used to analyze the data, providing simple percentages and means. Qualitative data were gathered, presented, coded, and analyzed, using thematic analysis in a Microsoft Excel spread sheet. PSPP linear regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the hypotheses and analyze the current situation of the education system using a SWOTAR analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, aspirations and expected results), while a strategic agenda and guide list served as a compass during the study. The study discovered that the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching-learning objectives), and feedback, all have significant impacts on the output (academic achievement). The strategies developed predict that providing more conducive lecture rooms, allocating a moderate number of students to each classroom, improving the facilities and study environment, and interactive and participatory teaching strategies, are critical to the training and preparation of HTM students in Nigeria. If implemented, the strategies can enhance the

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achievement of academic grades, such that it is suitable for filling employment vacancies in the HTM sector of the country.

Keywords: Hospitality and tourism management education system, Nigeria, performance achievement, planned change, strategy development

INTRODUCTION

A mismatch exists between the various employment opportunities available in Nigeria and the successful graduation of bachelor's students as a result of graduates not meeting up with the academic grade standard set by employers (Abiodun, 2010; Akinyemi et al., 2012; Asuquo & Agboola, 2014; Vanguard, 2018). This study, therefore, develops possible strategies for the improvement of academic achievement among hospitality and tourism management (HTM) students, in order to produce a closer match between the set standard for degree awards and HT employment in the country. The study digresses from relying on models and personal efforts. It involves the participation of HTM stakeholders and collaboration with students and staff using an action research approach (Blankenstein, 2004; Durlak et al., 2011; Khairuddin et al., 2014; O'Day, 2002; Pupat, 2009; Quereshi & Afzal, 2008). The need for action research is pertinent to changing academic performance achievement (improvement) in higher level HTM programs offered by education institutions in the country. The perspectives of the authors, Cummings and Worley (2009), Margerison (1978), and Mayaka and

Akama (2007) provide the information and rationale for this action research and survey feedback study which was conducted to complete a doctoral research dissertation.

Research Questions

1. What is the current status and impact of the HTME open system in terms of the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching learning objectives), and academic achievement, in relation to output (students' academic achievement)?
2. What are the possible strategies for improvement of academic achievement in terms of the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching learning objectives) and outputs (academic achievement), regarding the generation of a close match between the degree awards of HTM graduates and their future employment requirements?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on traditional organizational theories based on the attributes of teleological tradition and the philosophical

premise of purpose and final causes of actions. The earlier studies of Bengson and Moffett (2011), Burbles (2004), and Holden (2005), reveal that teleology as a doctrine explains phenomena by their purposes or ends. Teleology aids actions or processes when there is either intrinsic or extrinsic finality, or a combination of both. The tradition fits the theoretical and conceptual framework in this paper. However, the current literature is mainly related to Western countries while only a few sources relate to developing countries, including Africa and Nigeria.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Strategy development “is a continuum of successive stages such as: critical analysis of a system, policy formulation and appraisal, action planning, management and monitoring, review and evaluation. Experience and lessons learnt from implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, provide feedback for adjusting the current program, or for the next cycle of policy formulation and action planning” (Gwang-Chol, 2006, p.6). It is peculiar in nature due to the fact that it is limited in number; few strategies are usually developed at a time because of limited resources. It also involves many stakeholders across different sectors such as public and private sectors, NGOs, tourists, and locals, for broad approval and implementation. It is flexible, as it gives room for changes due to unforeseen occurrences, which must be handled with great care and

attention (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

Strategy development takes into cognizance the views of different stakeholders towards achieving success, effectiveness, and improvement, for organizations, groups, and individuals (Pupat, 2009; Qureshi & Afzal, 2008). The stakeholders play vital roles in developing possible strategies towards achieving effectiveness and improvement in the system (Al-Ashkar, 2014; Mayaka & Akama, 2007). People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known). Hence, parts of the past carried forward should be what is best about the past, while it is critical to value difference, and language creates reality. Significantly, action research enables participation and collaboration among strategy developers and stakeholders in the process of strategy development for a definite purpose.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In line with teleology tradition, the Figure below, portrays the theoretical framework for this research.

Organizational System

An organization is a collective with a relatively identifiable boundary, normative order, rules, ranks of authority (hierarchy), communication systems, and

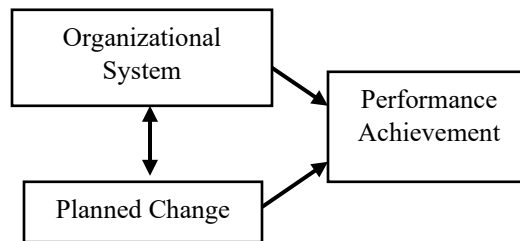


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for the Study

Source: Cummings, T. G. & Worley, C. G. (2009, p. 30). *Organization development and change* (9th ed.). Canada: Cengage Learning.

Nelson, D. L., & Quick, J. C. (2006, p. 9). *Organizational behavior: Foundations, realities and challenges* (5th ed.). Mason, OH: South Western/Thomson.

membership coordinating systems (procedures); this collective exists on a relatively continuous basis, in an environment, and engages in activities that are usually related to set goals. The activities have outcomes for organizational members, for the organization itself, and for society (Hall and Tolbert 2005, p. 4).

An organization exists in a task environment comprised of agencies and clients, competitors, customers, and regulatory agencies. Systems theory is a theory of social organizations, holding that organizations are like biological organisms, in that they may behave according to inputs from their environments, outputs resulting from organizational activity, and feedback leading to further inputs. Change in any one component of the organizational system affects all other parts (Milakovich & Gordon, 2009, p. 174).

The theory entails five major components, namely environment,

input, processes, outputs, and feedback, in a multidisciplinary approach, as the basis for the field of study known as 'general system theory' (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Nelson & Quick, 2006; von Bertalanffy, 1955). The system derives material, capital, and human input, from the surrounding environment. However, in the process, people interact with the structure, technology, and tasks, to produce products and services. The system collects particular inputs from its environment, transforming the input components to arrive at finished goods, services, and ideas, which are in turn returned to the environment. Feedback often helps to collect information from the environment on the outcome of the functions of the organization.

The organizational systems theory relies on interdisciplinary research on interdependent and interrelated components. Esteve-Calvo and Lloret Climent (2009)

stress the need to observe these interrelated components as they interact in the process, to determine possible psychological involvement and the associated consequences wherever turbulence occurs. Occurrences in the system and the associated interactions could cause damaging or positive impacts within the system connectivity, thereby affecting the organization's effectiveness and performance (Hall & Tolbert, 2005).

Katz and Kahn (1966) first applied the theory to organizations, declaring that human organizations should be thought of as open systems. The two scholars further explain that "open systems theory emphasizes the close relationship between a structure and its supporting environment" (p. 3). The open system theory explains the dynamic nature of organizations, portraying an open system organization that exists in a larger environmental context, whereby the evaluation of outputs often shows the extent to which organizational goals have been achieved (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Foster, 2014; Nelson & Quick, 2006).

Based on the elaborated system perspective model, the system approach exposes and addresses the quality of available manpower. As a result of current training structures in the country, manpower supplied by graduates of hospitality, tourism, and events management educational programs, demands improvement of the output from the education sector regarding readiness for HT employment (Babalola & Olapade,

2014). Comprehensive research is critical to designing and planning interventions for effectively increasing or improving performance. In an extensive sense, action planning includes identifying what (specific objectives), what for (outputs), how (strategies), who (responsibilities) and when (timelines) interventions should be made.

Planned Change

The planned change perspective involves the activities of preparing and engaging the whole establishment, groups, or individuals, for a new course of direction, goals, or outputs, towards achieving and improving wellbeing, effectiveness, and performance. Lewin's (1958) theory of planned change entails the three major processes of unfreezing, moving, and freezing. Building on the planned change model, based on the action research model and positive model, Cummings and Worley (2009) articulate the general model of planned change. This model entails four major active and participative processes and activities to be undertaken by practitioners, consultants, or change agents during intervention projects. The processes consist of entering and contracting, diagnosing, planning and implementing, and evaluating and institutionalizing.

Theoretically, the lines connecting all the activities emphasize that planned change is not straight forward, but is a linear process, involving considerable

overlap and feedback between all actions (Beer, & Nohria, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2009; Worley & Lawler, 2010). The stages overlap while initial plans may become irrelevant in the light of individual or group learning through experience. The theory is pertinent to innovations on solving issues affecting the end results of a system. Hence, the system approach is applied using planned change intervention in strategy development in the context of HTMES in this study.

Performance Achievement

“Performances are embedded in language. That is, certain words accomplish certain things, and what they do, formatively, refers to meanings embedded in language and culture” (Denzin, 2003, p. 190). Performance usually collides with culture in the organizational world (Schein, 2004). In an educational context, the concept of performance is well founded in various fields and disciplines, but it is indefinable, and therefore, hard to pin down. Hence, a definition of performance requires domains of behaviors and outcomes (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2008). Academic performance as academic achievement is related to “grade point average” (Rivers 2009, p. 14). That is, the percent of enrolled students studying a specific program with measurable and observable behavior during the course of study using different learning assessment methods and completing educational levels.

When launching the review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving learning outcomes, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009) disclosed that “performance in schools is increasingly judged on the basis of effective learning outcomes. Information is [however] critical to knowing whether the school system is delivering good performance and to providing feedback for improvement in student outcomes” (p.1). Performance achievement in this context is the achievement of academic performance referred to as a percentage of university admissions and registered students for a particular course completing each level with a particular grade point average.

Conceptual Framework

The Figure below illustrates the conceptual framework developed by the authors from Cheng (2002) and Salam (2015) for the purpose of this study.

Hospitality and Tourism Management Education Open System

As economic development is a critical concern in education reformation worldwide, HTM education from an open system perspective in organizations is comprised of the learning environment, inputs, processes, feedback, and output components.

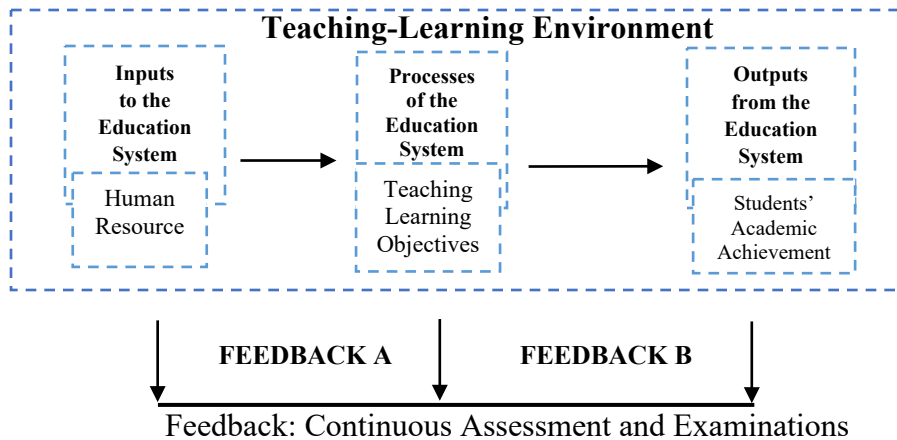


Figure 2: The Designed Conceptual Framework

Source: Cheng et. al. (2002, p. 20). Economic considerations in education policy making: a simplified framework. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(1), 18-39.

Salam, A. (2015). Input, process and output: System approach in education to assure quality and excellence in performance. *Bangladesh Journal of Medical Science*, 14(1), 1-2.

Each of these components embodies certain elements functioning together to achieve a common objective with regards to output (academic achievement) (Cheng et al., 2002; Hall & Tolbert, 2005). In such a system, the independent variables consist of the teaching-learning environment, inputs, processes, and feedback, while the dependent variable is the outputs from the system.

Teaching and Learning Environment, Inputs to the education system, Processes of the education system, and Feedback

In an educational context, the environment, also referred to as the learning environment, commonly consists of a classroom, occurring in

diverse physical settings and cultures in which teaching and learning takes place; this often incorporates teaching-learning environments which are interactive, autonomous, flexible, virtual, or have internal control (Bates, 2018; Huggett & Pownall, 2010; Stefanou et al., 2004).

Inputs are fundamentally the objectives and objectified contents that instructors put into the education system (Salam, 2015). They are acquired from the external environment of the organization and from parts of the organization (Cummings & Worley, 2009). This study considers human resources as one of the major elements among the inputs to the education system, facilitating teaching and learning in the system (Reeve, 2006; Stergiou, 2013).

The processes of the system are the center of the activity in an organizational system which shows continuity and growth in an open systems model. The education processes serve as mechanisms of conversion of inputs into outputs. In this study, the elements of the educational process include teaching-learning objectives, teaching methods, and teaching resources. The outcomes of the system entail outputs from the system which produce direct and indirect benefits and impacts of the outputs on the society that is significant to economic and non-economic effects (Darling & Heller, 2009).

Feedback in the form of pressures or needs forms the basis for education policy change and is a form of relevant information required in order to use assessment output to enhance learning (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008). Every student must receive information about his or her performance and the existing difference between the actual and expected state, and to successfully process the information (Brookhart, 2017). However, some approaches to learning do not explicitly include feedback as an important consideration, such as instruction-induced self-questioning. Three major sources of feedback are teachers, peers, and oneself (Hattie, 2009). The education output serves as a feedback mechanism in the education system. The flow of activities in the system assists in every phase, exchanging feedback for learning with other elements, and providing an

evaluation. Such evaluation often reveals the level of academic achievement (Cheng et al., 2002). Feedback is the single most powerful influence for improving achievement. The major role of feedback in providing connections between students' current and desired states is clear.

Outputs from the Education system: Students' Academic Performance Achievement

Historically, academic performance has been measured by teachers' observations using bulk assessment, summation, numerical methods, grading, alternate and differentiation methods. However, to arrive at the students' assessment of academic achievement, students should be assessed through technical, scientific, and cultural resources, based on the education structure in order to determine their academic performance during the course of the program. In educational organizations, success in achievement of academic performance is simply quantified by how well students meet set standards as measured by the academic institution and employers. Educational performance achievement is evaluated by the standardized achievement tests developed for a specific course (Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Rivers JR., 2009). Studies by Hsieh et. al. (2007) and Lee et. al. (2005) have shown that university students who are at risk of unemployment upon graduation tend to have challenges adjusting to

university as shown by low academic grades (achievement). From the outcome perspective, behaviorally, performance comprises of behaviors and how perfectly such behaviors are performed in relation to the achievement of objectives and goals which are relevant to the desired output even in an educational system. Output is referred to as the students' academic achievement which is the outcome of the education environment, its inputs, and processes (Salam, 2015).

The academic performance of students studying a specific program includes their measurable and observable behavior during the course of study using different learning assessment methods. When launching their review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving learning outcomes the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009) disclosed that "performance in schools is increasingly judged on the basis of effective learning outcomes. Information is critical to knowing whether the school system is delivering good performance and to providing feedback for improvement in student outcomes" (p.1). Academic performance relates to the system in terms of the quality of teaching, the organization's capacities and students' capabilities, the scale of resource provision, and the level of students' academic condition.

When considering the critical key economic sectors, issues, and matters of concern, it is worthwhile taking into account the demand and supply,

the structure of education, and the effects and interrelations of economic effects and consequences (World Education News and Reviews, 2017). The education system is driven by educational demand and supply. Hence, education policy and reform must deal with issues of both internal and external economic effectiveness of the education system. External economic effectiveness issues concern whether the existing education policy can meet the needs of new economic development in the new millennium and how education should be changed to better prepare new generations for this new knowledge-driven and technology intensive economy. (Cheng et al., 2002, p. 34)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This participatory action research and survey feedback employs a mixed method approach, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods (Jennings, 2010; Koshy et al., 2011; Veal, 2011). Such an approach provides the context undertaken for this research, allowing stakeholder participation and contribution to the study, rather than relying only on personal effort to achieve the two objectives. The method involves first diagnosing the current status and impact of the HTME open system in terms of the effects of the learning environment on output (academic achievement) in relation to students' academic achievement in Nigeria, and then to explore possible strategies for improvement of HTMS through

academic achievement, in terms of changes to the teaching environment in order to ensure a close match between the degrees awarded to HTM graduates and employment requirements in Nigeria.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H₀1: The hospitality and tourism management education system (HTMES) in terms of the teaching environment, inputs, processes, and feedback, does not have a significant impact on the output of the education system in terms of the academic achievement of hospitality and tourism management students in Nigeria.

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The outcomes of the education system diagnosis were presented in a feedback meeting with school leaders and other members, where a strategic meeting with staff members was recommended to develop strategies for improving the students' academic achievement. The strategy development meeting was scheduled and conducted at an agreed venue, day, date, and time, with participants comprising of academic and non-academic members of the school.

Participation and collaboration of the school members was solicited during the strategic meeting. Regarding participation, the strategic meeting was anchored while the participants were divided into four groups. Each group was enjoined to unanimously appoint a facilitator, and secretary.

Research Instrument

Primary data were collected using a semi structured questionnaire developed based on the review of related studies and submitted to research experts in the field of HTM for approval. The pilot study comprised of three academic staff, and three non-academic staff, totaling six staff members, along with fifty-four students comprising twelve, fourteen, fifteen, and thirteen students from the 100 level, 200 level, 300 level, and 400 level respectively. The questionnaire was pretested using Cronbach's alpha in the PSPP software to test the reliability of the research instrument (GNU PSPP Statistical Analysis Software, 2018). The questionnaire was then modified based on the outcome of the pilot study before conducting the main study. The main study was conducted through administration of a semi structured survey questionnaire. The measurement items utilized a Likert Scale with five responses "strongly agree", "agree", "neither agree nor disagree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". The survey consisted of three sections. The first section contained items pertaining to the participants' personal profile. The

second comprised open ended questions, while the final section entailed closed-ended questions under five sub sections. The first four sub sections of teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching-learning environment), and feedback, served as independent variables while the final section of output was considered as the dependent variable as students' academic achievement is the major indicator. Due to the nature of the study, an agenda and a strategic check list were also employed (Lewis & Chambers, 2000; Moutinho, 2000). The agenda and checklist serve as a compass during the strategy development process which includes defining and clarifying the vision, mission, and goals of the institution and the HTMES analysis.

Respondents

The population utilized in this study comprised of the entire student and staff body of the thirty-nine universities offering HTM and other related courses in Nigeria at the time of this research. Hence, a sample was drawn from the population as it was impossible and rigorous to study the entire population. A list of universities offering programs in either HTM, HHM, or Hotel Management and Tourism (HMT) across geo-political zones in Nigeria was compiled for the study. A lottery method was used, involving a blind folded pick of geo-political zone, with the North Central zone selected for the study. The method supports sampling in a finite

population and gives equal chance to every university within each zone. Furthermore, due to the time lag for the study, a convenience, non-probability sampling was adopted to select the study organization.

The School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management, KWASU, Malete, Ilorin in the North Eastern zone of Nigeria established in the 2009/2010 academic session, forms the main study organization for the research and venue for strategy development. The school ran only undergraduate programs during the study period from 2014 to 2018. A cluster sampling, non-probability sampling was adopted to determine the sample size for the study; this comprised of only two stakeholder focus groups and included a total of 21 staff and 540 HTM students.

Data Collection Methods

HTM students in the 100 to 400 level were invited level by level for briefing on participation in the study, with the specific role of filling-out and returning the questionnaire. Survey questionnaires were distributed to the students and collected back at the venue. The duration for administration and collection of the survey questionnaire for each level was between one hour and thirty minutes and two hours. Writing pens were provided for students in order to curb any challenges of some students lacking writing pens. It also served as an incentive for the students. This was necessary in order to avoid the stress of tracking students to return the

questionnaires. Due to the long hours in the course of the strategy development meeting, light refreshments and writing materials were provided for the participants while snap photo shots and flip charts were employed to document the research process.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The quantitative data are presented using bar charts and were analyzed using PSPP statistical analysis, a free software tool used to provide simple percentages, and means (*M*), as well as the linear Regression and ANOVA which were utilized to test the hypothesis. The study presented, codified, and analyzed the qualitative data using thematic analysis in an MS Excel spread sheet. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Aspirations, and Expected Results (SWOTAR) analytical tool was employed to analyze the education system (Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009). The activities further included development of possible strategies for the improvement of academic achievement taking into consideration the teaching-learning environment, inputs, processes, and feedback.

RESULTS

Research Question 1. What is the current status and impact of the HTME open system in terms of the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching learning objectives), and academic

achievement in relation to the output (students' academic achievement)?

QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Profiles of the first group of the participants

The total of 525 participants across four academic levels (100 level, 200 level, 300 level and 400 level) comprised 118, 140, 150, and 117 actual participants from each respective level, while 15 expected participants (approximately 3%), were unable to participate in the research.

The results in Figure 4 showed that both males and females were studying for bachelor's degrees in the HTM education context.

The results in Figure 5 show the present CGPA of the participants. None (0%) of the 525 participants had a first class CGPA, 12 participants (2%) had obtained a second class upper, 193 participants (37%) possessed second class lower, 263 participants (50%) obtained third class, and 57 participants (11%) had obtained a pass. About 98% of the students were on track to graduate with grades below second class upper, which is the degree grade set as the standard for employment by the Nigerian labor recruiters.

The results in Figure 6 depict that only 33 (6%) students were aware of the program before securing admission into the program while 492 (94%) had no information regarding

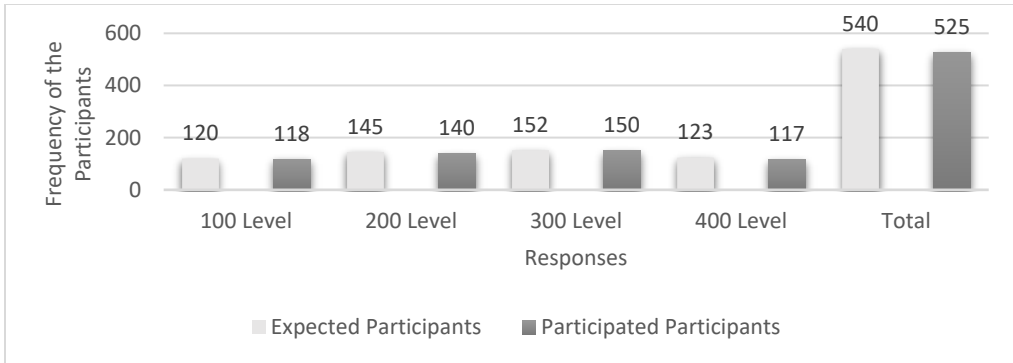


Figure 3: The Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Expected and Actual Participants

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

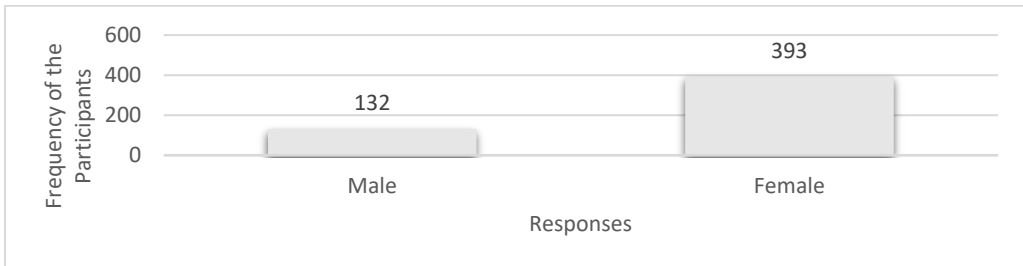


Figure 4: Gender Identity of the Actual Participants

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

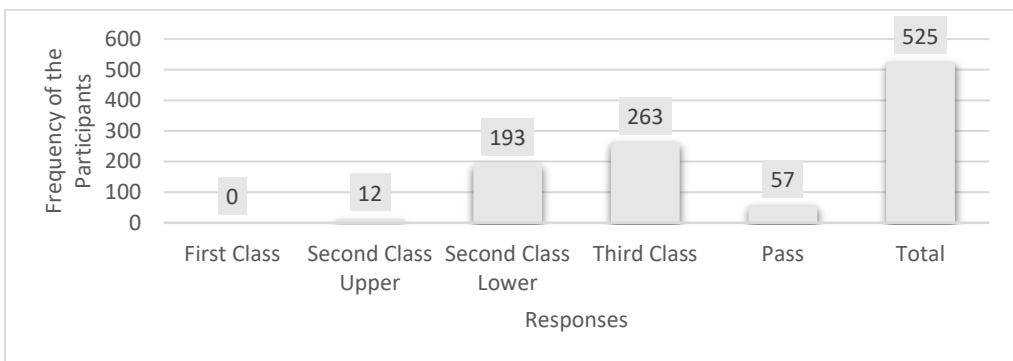


Figure 5: The Frequency Distribution of the Present CGPA of the Actual Participants

Source: Field Survey, 2018.



Figure 6: The Frequency Distribution of the Level of Awareness of the Participants before Admission into an HTM Program

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

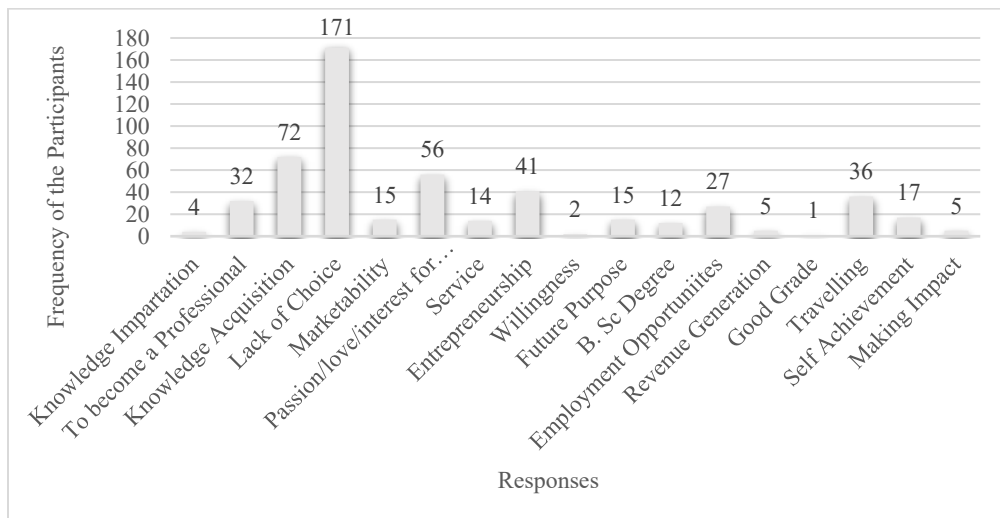


Figure 7: Diagnosis of HTMES: Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Studying HTM

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

the program prior to gaining admission for studying an HTM bachelor’s degree. A greater proportion of the students lacked prior knowledge and/or did not actually apply for the course but were offered admission to study the course.

As displayed, Figure 7 shows that 4(1%), 32(6%), 72(14%), 171(33%), 15(3%), 56(11%) and 14(3%) of the

students were studying HTM for different reasons including knowledge impartation, becoming a professional, knowledge acquisition, lack of choice, marketability, passion/love/interest for the course, and service, respectively. 41(8%), 2(0%), 15(3%), 12(2%) and 27(5%) of the participants were studying HTM on the grounds of

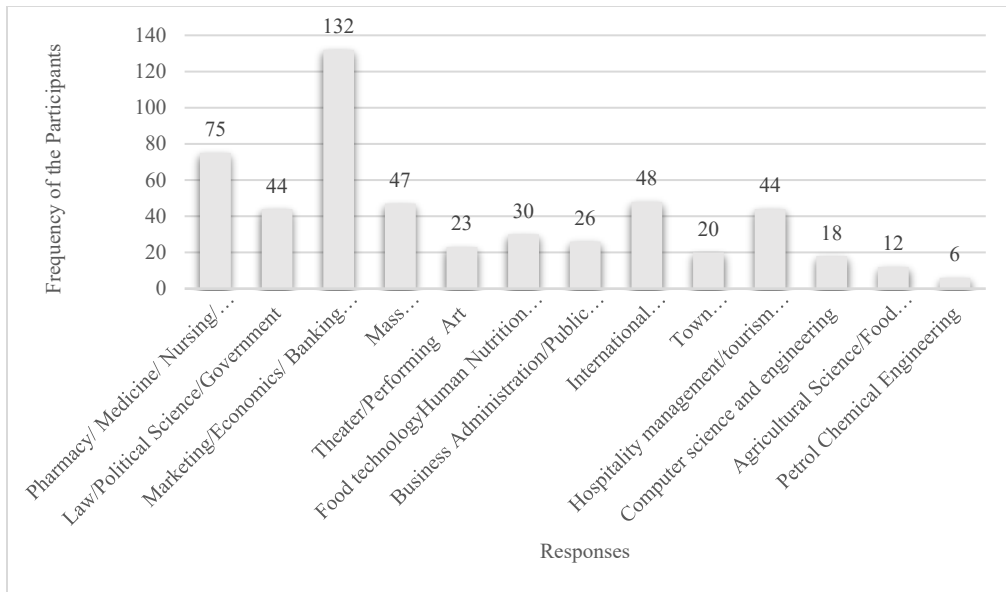


Figure 8: Diagnosis of HTMES: Frequency Distribution of Preferred course(s) of study before securing admission into HTM studies

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

entrepreneurship, willingness, future purpose, B.Sc. degree, and respectively. Others disclosed that the rationale for studying the course included revenue generation, good grade, travelling, self- achievement, and making impacts, at 5(1%), 1(0%), 36(7%), 17(3%), and 5 (1%) students respectively.

Figure 8 portrays the preferred course(s) of the students before admission into the B.Sc in HTM. The results in Figure 8 showed that the minority of students were studying the course for knowledge impartation and acquisition, professionalism, marketability, passion for service, entrepreneurship or willingness, future purpose, and self-achievement, which includes obtaining a degree, employment opportunities, revenue

generation, travelling opportunities, and only to make impacts in the society. 75(14%) students preferred studying Pharmacy, Medicine, Nursing, Plant Biology, Science Laboratory Technology, Botanical Science, Human Kinetics, or Microbiology; while 44 (8%) would rather study Law, Political Science, or Government; 132 (25%) desired to study Marketing, Economics, Banking and Finance, Accounting, Entrepreneurship, Commerce, or Actuarial Science; 47 (9%) have preference for Mass Communication, Linguistics, or Library and Information Science; 23 (4%) preferred to study Theater or Performing Arts; and 30 (6%) aspired to study Food Technology, Human Nutrition and Dietetics, or Food Science.

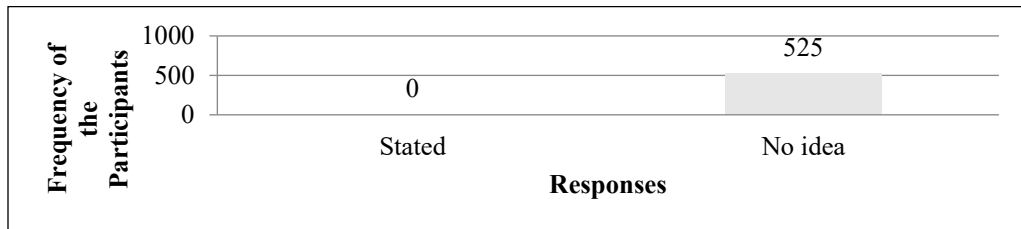


Figure 9: Frequency Distribution of HTMES Diagnosis: Objective, vision, and mission of the program according to the Participants

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

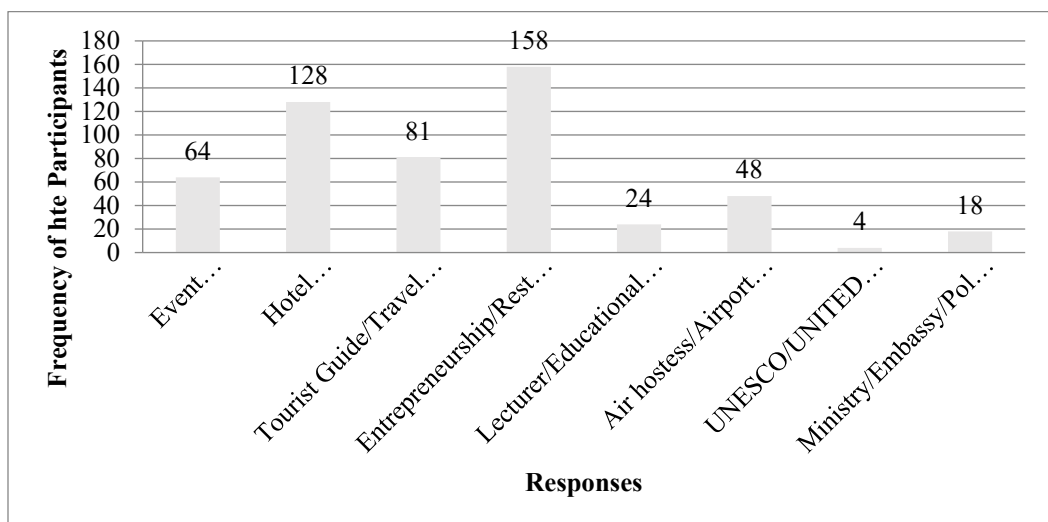


Figure 10: Diagnosis of HTMES: Frequency Distribution of Possible employment and career choice(s) upon graduation as HTM graduates

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Furthermore, 26 (5%) wished to study Business Administration, or Public Administration, 48 (9%) preferred to study International Relations, History, Sociology, Criminology, or Psychology; 20 (4%) preferred to study Town Planning, Geography, Architecture, or Geology; 44 (8%) really desired studying

Hospitality, or Tourism Management; 18 (3%) wished to study Computer Science and Engineering; 12 (2%) would like to study Agricultural Science, or Food Agriculture and Biological Engineering; and 6 (1%) preferred to study Petro-chemical Engineering. Based on the findings, in line with the responses to question

one on the reasons for studying, this indicated that only 44 out of 525, that is, only 8% of the participants had a preference for studying HTM in comparison to other courses before admission into the program. This corroborates the findings that 6% of the requested students had knowledge of the course before admission.

The findings shown in Figure 9 demonstrate that none (0%) of the participants were able to state either the objective, vision, or mission of the program, at the time of this research. The students generally were uninformed or unaware of the nature, vision, mission, and objectives of the program.

The results displayed in Figure 10 show that 12% of the participants hope to work in the event sector, while 24% indicated their interest to work in the hospitality sector, and 15% had intentions to work in the tourism sector. 30% of the participants would like to be entrepreneurs in the HT industry and 5% hope to be educators. The results further revealed that 1% and 3% of the participants aspired to be international, and national or local employees respectively.

Quantitative Data Presentation and Analysis

Regarding the teaching environment, Table 1 shows that respondents chose 'strongly disagree' on items 1.1 to 1.4, with mean values of 1.35, 1.30, 1.37, and 1.25 respectively. The responses regarding inputs (human resources) showed strong disagreement for items

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4 with mean values ranging from 1.25 to 1.37. The findings for processes (teaching and learning objectives) showed strong agreement for item 3.11 with a mean of 4.26, and disagreement with item 3.1.2 which had a mean value of 2.35. Furthermore, the outcomes regarding feedback showcased strongly disagree for items 4.1 and 4.2 ($M = 1.32$ and 1.30 respectively). Significantly, findings regarding output revealed strongly disagree on items 5.1 and 5.2 ($M = 1.20$ and 1.25 respectively). The respondents generally strongly disagreed with most of the parameters regarding the teaching environment, human resources, feedback, and output (students' academic achievement). The status of the teaching environment implies that the teaching environment is yet to conform to interactive, flexible, and virtual teaching and learning environments. The service nature of the education sector requires instructors to begin to possess a 'Make A Difference' (MAD) skill in different ways in order to MAD in the education system.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The study assumes a 95% confidence level and 0.05 statistical significance (alpha) level. Thus, the null (H_0) hypothesis will be accepted if the p-value is greater than the 0.05 significance (alpha) level, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) will be accepted if the p-value is less than the

Table 1: Diagnosis of HTMES: Teaching and Learning Environment, Inputs, Processes, Feedback, and Output

No	Label	N	Mean	Rating Level
1	Teaching-Learning Environment			
1.1	Student-teacher interaction and participation are allowed in the classroom during teaching	525	1.35	Strongly Disagree
1.2	Instructors have the ability to facilitate information and processes	525	1.30	Strongly Disagree
1.3	Instructors are willing to accept alternative ideas, feedback, and views from the students.	525	1.37	Strongly Disagree
1.4	Instructors demonstrate willingness to provide answers and responses to students' questions.	525	1.25	Strongly Disagree
2	Inputs to the Education System			
2.1	Human Resources			
2.1.1	Instructors are committed to teaching the course.	525	1.37	Strongly Disagree
2.1.2	Instructors are enthusiastic to teaching and students	525	1.31	Strongly Disagree
2.1.3	Instructors have a positive attitude towards students	525	1.32	Strongly Disagree
2.1.4	Instructors are always punctual to the class	525	1.25	Strongly Disagree
3	Processes of the Education System			
3.1	Teaching-Learning Objectives			
3.1.1	Objectives of the courses are clearly stated in the course outlines	525	4.26	Strongly Agree
3.1.2	Course objectives are in line with the vision and mission of the program.	525	2.35	Disagree
4	Feedback			
4.1	Feedback on continuous assessment is just and on time	525	1.32	Strongly Disagree
4.2	Feedback on examinations is just and on time	525	1.30	Strongly Disagree
5	Output			
5.1	My present CGPA is equivalent to second class upper or above	525	1.20	Strongly Disagree
5.2	I will be able to meet the labor academic degree award requirement upon graduation	525	1.25	Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2018

0.05 significance (alpha) level. The number of the first group of participants totaled 525. The results regarding teaching environments, show an R² value of 0.22, p-value of 0.000, ANOVA F (4, 520) of 37.57, and beta coefficient of 0.58. The result indicates a statistically significant difference from 0, utilizing an alpha level of 0.05, as the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 alpha level.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The findings regarding the input of human resources, reveals an R² of 0.60, p-value of 0.000, ANOVA F (4, 520) of 191.36, and beta coefficient of 0.38. The findings are significantly different from 0, employing an alpha level of 0.05, as the calculated p-value is less than the significant alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the alternative

hypothesis is accepted.

Regarding processes in terms of the objective, goals of the course, and resources, the results reveal an R^2 of 0.18, p-value of 0.000, ANOVA F (2, 522) of 57.81, and beta coefficient of 0.68. These results indicate a significant difference from 0, when applying an alpha level of 0.05, as the p-value is less than the alpha level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The results shown for feedback reveal an R^2 of 0.25, p-value of 0.000, and ANOVA F (2, 522) of 87.97, with beta coefficient of 0.64. Statistically, the result indicates a significant difference from 0, as the p-value is less than the alpha significance level (0.05). For this research, the significance value (p-value) of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, hypothesis H_{10} was found to be false, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This shows that the education system, in terms of the teaching environment, does have a significant impact on the output (academic achievement).

The result of the diagnosis of the current status of the education system shows that in terms of the teaching environment, the education system has a significant impact on output (academic achievement). The study then proceeded to question 1 in order to develop possible strategies for improvement of the academic achievement of students. The expected participants for the study comprised of 10 academic staff and 11 non-academic staff, with a total of 21 HTM staff. However, only 6

academic staff and 7 non-academic staff showed interest in the research with 46% and 54% respectively, amounting to a total of 13 staff.

Research Question 2: What are the possible strategies for the improvement of academic achievement in terms of the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching learning objectives) and outputs (academic achievement) to ensure a close match between the HTM graduates degree awards and employment requirements?

HTMES Analysis

Analysis of the education system as identified by the study participants using the SWOT and SOAR (SWOTAR) analytical tool is presented in Figure 11 below. This analysis identified the existing strengths of the system, revealing that the course is gaining popularity among students, while the students also enjoy local and international field trips within West Africa. The present weaknesses of the education system revealed that most students chose the course as a last option. There is shortage of resources for the program compared to other well-established programs in the university. The education system lacks good communication flow between staff and students. As an emerging course, the program has potential for knowledge impartation, and as a source of empowerment for students, with availability of numerous employment opportunities for the

students upon graduation. This is even more important as the government has indicated that tourism is an alternative source of income generation for the nation. The future success of the education system is threatened by the lack of interest in the program among prospective students and by the low number of admitted students in each session. The organization aspires to witness an increase in awareness of the program including wider societal acceptance of the program whereby the majority of admitted students would have chosen the course preferentially and not accepted admission to study HTM as a last choice or only opportunity to enter university. It is expected that the course would be selected by more students as a first-choice course when seeking admission into the university with better staff motivation.

Strategies Developed for Academic Achievement Improvement of HTMS

The strategies developed by the study participants for improvement of academic achievement are displayed in Figure 12. Improvement in the academic achievement of students can be attained through development of the teaching environment, for example by providing more conducive lecture rooms. From a human resources perspective, the improvement can be attained through employment of foreign and indigenous staff with relevant qualifications and industry experience, local and international staff training and development, and equipping and allocating conducive offices for staff. In addition, cordial interpersonal relationships among

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Growing popularity and awareness of the program ✓ Local and international field trips 	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities (O)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Availability of numerous employment opportunities across the sector ✓ Impartation of knowledge by the superiors to the subordinates 	<p style="text-align: center;">Aspirations (A)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing awareness of the program ✓ First choice selection by students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Chosen as the last option by most students ✓ Insufficient Staff with Ph.D. in HTM ✓ Communication gaps between staff and students <p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses (W)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Low level of admission ✓ Lack of interest in the program ✓ Religion <p style="text-align: center;">Threats (T)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A first choice for prospective students ✓ Better staff motivation <p style="text-align: center;">Expected Results (S)</p>

Figure 11: SWOTAR Analysis of HTMES

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

staff, planning and presentation of seminars by staff with better student attendance and higher staff motivation, and provision of incentives to the most productive staff of the year can be employed. Furthermore, through teaching and learning objectives, familiarization of students with the school handbook, providing course outlines prior to or during the first class, and stating the

course objectives clearly at the beginning of the course, can all be adopted to help improve students' academic achievement. Considering feedback, improvement in academic achievement can be realized by releasing student assessment results in a continuous manner, prior to the final examinations alongside appointment of active level advisers.

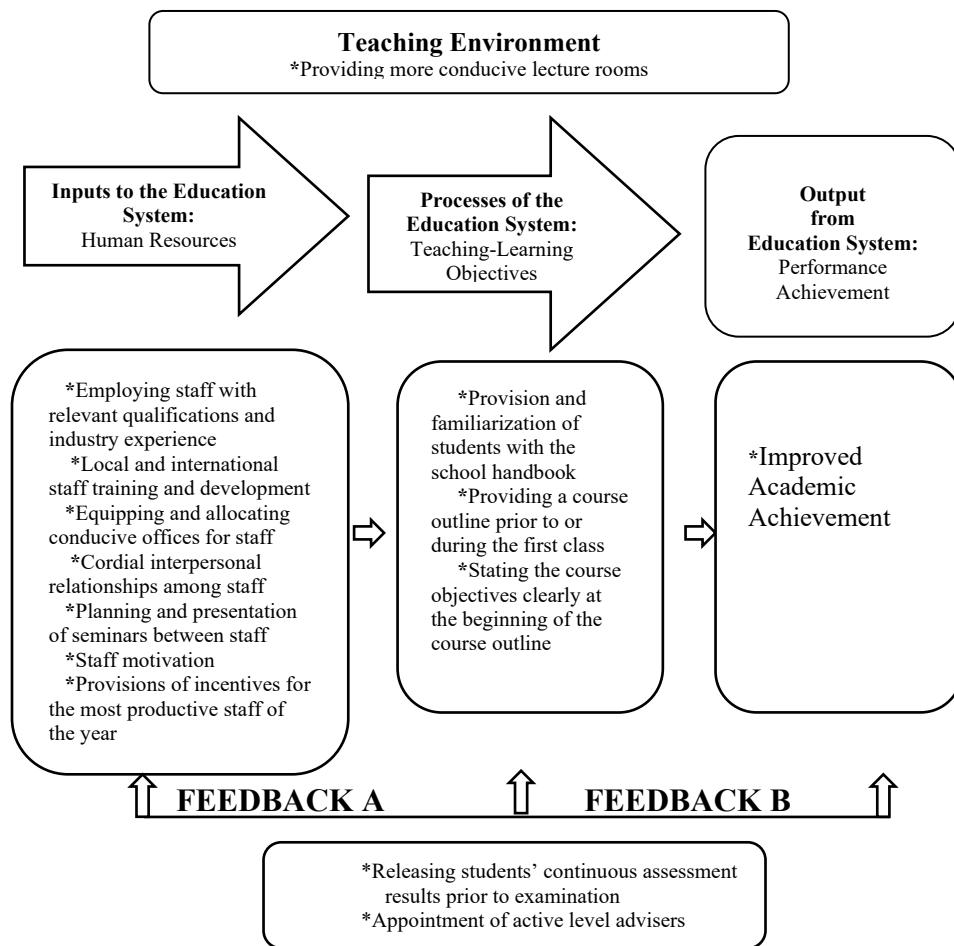


Figure 12: Strategy Developed for the Improvement of Academic Achievement in HTMS

Source: Field Survey, 2018

DISCUSSION

Academic performance is related to the system in terms of the quality of teaching, the organization's capacities and students' capabilities, the scale of resource provision and the level of students' academic condition. The quest to empower educational human resources must be conversant with development in the industry. Hence, there is a need for human resources to begin to possess MAD skills and self-development. This will enable them to help students to develop better comprehension and the skills required in their field of study and future career.

Regarding teaching and learning methods and resources, the students only strongly agreed that two or more instructors sometimes co-teach some courses, but strongly disagreed with demonstration of knowledge, appropriateness of work-load, relevant materials and technology during teaching, and complementary electronic and non-electronic sources of teaching. This indicates that instructors lack knowledge in the use of relevant technology, while solely depending on non-electronic media demonstration during teaching. Electronic or soft resources are significant to creating, drawing, and writing special documents, and to saving documents for future use. Such resources include videos, posters, television and radio programs, CDs, DVDs, IWBs, PowerPoint presentations, among others. Students ought to be familiar with information communication technology in an

environment of virtual learning and with exchanging communication between themselves and their friends. This indicates that teaching methods and resources could be combined and utilized during teaching and should be distributed and shared, not locked up. Significantly, these core learning resources assist instructors to promote, develop and share resources enhanced by technological trends and developments, assisting students to understand their course and to know what it takes to pass the course. Nonetheless, the resources should not be modes of entertaining the students but rather chosen carefully to enhance students' teaching and learning process in a conducive teaching environment.

The output from the educational system provides the inputs for other subsystems. The current findings showed that during the period of the study, about 98% of the students were currently on CGPA lower than the standard required for a second-class upper division. This means that the majority of students are likely to graduate with degree awards below the second-class upper division, and thus, will be unable to meet the academic degree labor requirement upon graduation.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Research involving application of intervention in an action research and feedback survey approach is common in Europe, the USA, and Asia in an educational context

(Blankenstein, 2004; Durlak et al., 2011; O'Day, 2002; Papat, 2009; Quereshi & Afzal, 2008), but only one such research study, conducted in a hospital setting, exists in the context of Nigeria (Khairuddin et al., 2014). Blankenstein (2004) and associates from the Harnessing Optimism Potential through Education (HOPE) Foundation conducted a study on effective schools in the United States. This study categorized the nature of learning organizations into six principles. These 6 principles included having a common mission, vision, values, and goals. Next, ensuring achievement for all students: creating systems for prevention and intervention. Then, collaborative teams focused on teaching and learning. This is followed by using data to guide decision making and continuous improvement. It also included gaining active engagement from families and the community, and building sustainable leadership. The principles form an excellent model for the application of action research to achieve effectiveness in schools due to the paradigm shift from school reform through traditional changes to identification of the main issues of teaching and learning.

Durlak et. al. (2011) drew a comparison between Universal Social and Emotional Learning (USEL) programs, and control. The study concentrates on a wide range of educational levels, from kindergarten through to the high school student age groups. The meta-analysis comprised of 213 school-based USEL programs, involving 270,034 schools from

kindergarten through high school (Durlak, et al., 2011, p. 405). The program was moderated using four recommended practices for skills development. First, identification of relevant studies. Next is the examination of lists of reference for identified research and reviews of youth interventions. Then, the conduction of manual searches in eleven journals between 1970 and 2007, including the American Journal of Community Psychology and Child Development. This was followed by website searches on social-emotional learning, youth development, and the work of relevant researchers. The findings of the study revealed that due to the action research effort, the practitioners, in collaboration with academic staff, were able to conduct the programs successfully.

This study and its outcome make further contributions to using action research and a survey feedback approach to diagnose and analyze the education system, and to develop possible strategies for improvement of academic achievement by involving stakeholders, namely HTM students and staff. There is a synergy between the teaching environment, inputs (human resources), processes (teaching-learning objectives), and output (academic achievement) in HTMES. Implementing possible strategies developed in collaboration with the education stakeholders is pertinent to improving the academic achievement of students in order to provide a close match, reducing the existing gap between academic grades and labor requirements in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Future researchers are encouraged to further diagnose and analyze the current status of the HTME open system in terms of inputs (curriculum and learning assessment systems), processes (teaching methods and resources, instructional design and preparation, and support provision and resources), and output (academic achievement), in order to further discover issues affecting the academic achievement of students.
2. Future research must consider the implementation of the suggested strategies and further evaluate the influence of these strategies on the academic achievement of students in the education context for possible institutionalization of the strategies.

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