

UNDERGRADUATES' MINDSET TOWARDS THE STUDY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN

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Abstract

The study examined the attitudes of undergraduates towards the study of Primary Education Studies in University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design survey. The population of the study covered all 705 undergraduates in the Primary Education Studies unit in the Department of Adult and Primary Education in the session 2021/2022, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, while the target population comprised of all the 300 and 400 level undergraduates in the unit representing 384 undergraduates. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 students from each level and this gave a total population of 200 participants. The instrument that was adopted for the collection of the data was a questionnaire, titled: Questionnaire on the Attitude of Undergraduate towards Primary Education Studies (QAUSPES). The research question that was raised was analyzed using Frequency distribution and percentages, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The findings revealed that there is negative attitude of undergraduate towards the study of primary education studies as a course. Also, it was revealed from the findings that there is significant difference in the attitudes of undergraduate towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender, and there is no significant difference in the attitudes of undergraduate towards the study of primary education studies in the university of Ilorin on the basis of level of study. It was recommended among others that students who meet up with the admission criteria should always be considered for their course of choice.

Keywords: Undergraduates, Undergraduates' attitude, Primary education studies.

Introduction

Education can be expressed to be the training and instruction designed which impact knowledge to children and young people in schools and colleges. It can be said to be a social instrument through which we guide a nation's destination and shape its future. Education is not merely to contribute to the continuity of culture. It is also a means to peacefully change the material foundation of civilization

towards a better version. As a traditional goal, culture preserves the past and the present, thereby developing intelligence. Furthermore, education improves students' capabilities and skills. It introduces new ideas and values among students of different levels. It is the process through which knowledge is transferred from one individual or group of society to another.

Education serves as a development agent, valued by the world as a whole because it brought total liberation to humanity. It has helped in transforming man from a state of ignorance and misery to knowledge and happiness. It makes man useful to himself and his society as a whole. As rightly observed by Umoh (2006), education improves individual physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and emotionally by providing suitable and programmed environment, teaching new concepts(knowledge), attitudes and skills that will enable individuals to be useful to themselves and their society. Education at this level strengthens the learner's feet to climb the educational ladder to the height of academic achievement if a good foundation is established.

Primary education as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), refers to education given to children aged six to eleven plus in primary schools. The primary level of education is the key to the success or failure of the whole system since it serves as the basis upon which other levels are built. This shows that the primary level of education is most crucial to the success of other levels, hence the need for the stakeholders to their possible best to build a solid foundation for its sustainability.

Umoh (2006) stated that for primary education to be the bedrock of educational system, it must maintain and continuously bring to the learners elementary and general knowledge of science, by teaching them to use and operate scientific objects and devices so that they may be accustomed with such foundational knowledge as they advance to other levels of education. In other to give primary education the focus, FRN (2004) stated the goals of this level as to:

- Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability of communicate effectively;
- Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- Develop in the child's ability to adapt to the child's changing environment.
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

- Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

The launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was the Federal Government effort to salvage the primary education system which is the foundation level of other educational levels and in fact, the corner stone of national development (Okpala, 2007). This confirmed the submission by the present authors that primary education is the foundation for qualitative higher education in Nigeria. It is true that the quality of primary education can have a significant impact on the future success of students in their chosen professions. A solid foundation in the core subjects, such as mathematics, science, language, and social studies, have the potential to provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to pursue careers in various fields like technology, engineering, education, law and others. The concept qualitative is made use of to portray the expected better outcome from higher education based on the desired foundation laid at the primary level of education.

The Federal Government of Nigeria acknowledged the essence of primary education in Nigeria and, as a result, it was given prominence in the National Policy of Education (FRN, 2014) as one of the programmes in the Nigerian educational system. Bagudo (2008) stated that reports all over the globe showed that an estimated figure of one hundred million children struggled daily for survival in villages and cities, and were exposed to the risks of hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and abuses. In support of this view, Mahuta (2007) stressed the need to address those problems and salvage the children and the next generation of children from those ills. This necessitated the programme of Early Childhood Care Development and Primary Education. He further posited that the aim was to improve the proper development of children, identify and address their problems, harness their potential, mould their character, enhance their learning, and also equip them for life. This is in a bit to ensure that their actions would be tailored towards positive personal, communal and global development in all ramifications of life.

Other past studies carried out, found out that attitudes are mental predispositions or tendencies to respond positively or negatively to things such as persons, events or objects (McMillan, 2000). According to Gilakjani and Leong (2012), attitude is a learning predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or an unfavourable manner with respect to a given object. A basic thing

to consider is attitude which can alter every aspect of any person including education. Also, attitude determines students' ability and willingness to learn a particular subject. It could be positive or negative; and a negative attitude, if not properly checked, will make a student to miss out on his learning. Therefore, it is important to strive to changing students' negative attitude towards learning and this involves looking into the factors driving the individual and using the information obtained to bring about positive change. On the other hand, a positive attitude and perception help students to learn efficiently.

Attitude is a summary evaluation of a stimulus object which can be anything. It can simply be translated as to like or dislike the object and has two important attributes which are strength and direction. They further asserted that attitude have three components which are cognitive information, affective information and behavioural information. These components seem to cap all relative belief constructs in the literature by assuming that they all serve under one of the components of attitude. For example, all kinds of beliefs, views, cognition and so on, about Primary Education can be classified as cognitive information forming up the cognitive domain of attitude. More so, all anxiety about and fear and self-perception can be classified as emotional information forming up the affective domain of attitude. Relatively, all previous experience and behaviours tailored towards primary education as a course can be sorted as behavioural information constituting the behavioural domain of attitude (Maio & Haddock, 2010).

Marzano (2016) identifies two categories of attitudes and perception which affect learning, attitude and perception of the learning situation (climate) and attitude towards the perception of classroom tasks. He further stated that the basic premise of the dimension of learning model was that effective teachers continuously reinforced attitude and perception in both categories.

According to Goldin (2002), attitudes are rather stable and they contain two factors, affective and cognitive. Marchis (2011) posited that attitude had three components which are: emotional response; behaviour related to the subject; and beliefs regarding learning. Ashby (2009) in his work outlined the factors that influence attitude towards learning a subject to be: confidence and belief in the importance of the subject; and the utility in practice and anxiety. The development of a positive attitude towards a profession helps in facilitating creative thinking and motivating students (Soibamcha & Pandey, 2016).

In a study conducted by Pepe and Özkurt (2016) on the attitude of university female and male students towards primary education studies. The result showed that students' attitudes towards

primary education studies' classes were negative, but female students had more positive attitudes than male students. Devi (2005) in his study discovered that success in the teaching field depended upon two prime factors which are attitude towards the profession and job satisfaction. In another study of Pepe and Özkurt (2016), it was shown that intelligence, attitude towards teaching and academic performance of undergraduate students put on an impression on their competence. On the issue of gender and attitude.

Moreso, Steyn, Haris and Harte (2014) conducted a study on why student did not consider offering courses in primary education studies. Their study revealed that most students were not aware of the existence of the course until they were given it as a course to study. The study also showed that the choice of studying primary education studies was merely a backup plan for many students in the programme. Another revelation from the study was that a positive correlation existed between students' interest and aspiration.

One of the reasons primary education studies as a course is not usually considered by undergraduates is the perception that they will end up as primary school teachers. Egwu (2015), in her study revealed that students had a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. According to her, it was because teaching was being perceived as a difficult task, and teachers were not well paid, compared to other professions.

Ewan (2013) believes that the goal of having a qualification in primary education studies by undergraduates was a goal that should be motivated by all. He further gave the essence of primary education studies to include: enabling the students to gain knowledge of developmental milestone from the time a child was born through his fifth year of life; enabling students to understand the early learning process; helping students to learn relationship-building skills; enabling them to provide hands-on learning experiences; and motivating students to campaign for resources and initiatives. Others were fostering a clear understanding of young children, the psychology behind their decisions and actions, their uniqueness, and their physical, emotional and learning needs. Despite the benefits of primary education studies, undergraduate students seem not to be too keen in studying it in most Nigerian universities.

Undergraduates' attitude towards learning a subject or studying a course, to a large extent, determines their future prospects in that course. Attitude predicts a student's commitment while attendance and personal research attributes are necessary for him to achieve success. While some

students may exhibit a highly positive attitude towards a course/programme, others may display a non-challant attitude towards the same course. This could be attributed to several interrelated factors such as understanding the course content, perception of the course, loving or being disillusioned with the course, mode of instruction and self- motivation.

Primary education studies as a course, has several benefits which include enabling students to understand the early learning process, helping students to learn and understand relationship-building skills, enabling them to provide hands-on learning experiences, motivating students to advocate for resources and initiatives, fostering a profound understanding of young children, and above all, providing job opportunities for students after the period of training. Despite these benefits many undergraduates seem not to be interested in studying the course.

The purpose of this study is to examine the undergraduates' attitudes towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin, Ilorin. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the attitude of undergraduate towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin; Ascertain the difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender; Ascertain whether there is significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of level of study.

Research Question

1. What is the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of Primary Education Studies in University of Ilorin?

Research Hypotheses

- H0 1:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of Primary Education Studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender.
- H0 2:** There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of Primary Education Studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of level of study.

Methodology

The focus of this study was mainly on the attitudes of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. A descriptive research design of survey type

was adopted in this study. The design was adopted because this study intended to check whether the undergraduates' attitudes towards Primary Education Studies is either positive or negative. The population of the study consisted of all 705 undergraduates in the Primary Education Studies unit in the Department of Adult and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, while the target population comprised all the 300 and 400 undergraduates in the unit representing 384 undergraduates. Simple random sample technique was employed to select 200 undergraduates from the target population as the sample for this study.

A researcher-designed questionnaire titled 'Attitude of Undergraduates towards Primary Education Studies (AUSPES)'. The instrument was sectionised into two: the first section elicited information on the demographic data of the respondents, while the second section gathered information on attitude of Undergraduates towards Primary Education Studies. The items in the second section were in a four Likert Scale of SA-strongly agree, A-agree, D-disagree and SD-strongly disagree.

The reliability of the instrument was established by administering the questionnaire to 20 undergraduates who were not part of the respondents for this study. The data gathered from the reliability test was analyzed using Cronbach alpha and reliability coefficient of 0.86 was .86, which was adjudged reliable enough for this study. Also, descriptive and inferential statistical tools of frequency, percentage, and independent t-test were used to answer the research question and test the hypotheses raised in this study. Frequency, percentage and range were used to answer the research question while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The results of the findings are shown below:

Results

RQ1: What is the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin?

In order to determine the attitude of undergraduate students towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin, the total response of each of the undergraduate students which was in continuous data were converted to discrete data and were summed up, having a total minimum of 20, maximum of 80 and the range of 60. This was categorized into two categorical forms, which are (negative and positive) attitudes and the cut-off was 30. Scores between 20 – 50

and 51 – 80 were categorized as negative and positive attitudes of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies. The result is presented in the table below;

Table 1: Summary of the attitudes of undergraduates towards primary education studies.

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Negative	113	56.5
Positive	87	43.5

The table revealed that 113 (56.5%) of the total responses showed negative attitude, while 87 (43.5%) of the total responses showed positive attitudes of undergraduate towards the study of primary education studies. As it was revealed above, though, the percentage level is close, but the 113 (56.5%) of the total responses showed negative attitude towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin are above average. This can therefore be concluded that, the undergraduates have negative attitudes towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin are above average.

Two research hypotheses were formulated, and were tested with the use of independent t-test.

H0 1 There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender.

Table 3: Summary of t-test showing the significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender.

Gender	N	X	SD	df	t. value	Sig.	Decision
Male	84	48.32	3.01	198	0.53	0.04	Significant
Female	116	51.68	4.12				

Sig. 0.04 < 0.05

From table 3 above, result shows t value as 0.53 and the degree of freedom 198. The null hypothesis is not accepted since the significant value of 0.04 is less than 0.05 of Alpha level. This means that, undergraduate students' attitudes towards primary education studies differ by their gender. This implies that the attitude showed by the female undergraduates towards the student of primary education studies is different from their male counterparts. Therefore, hypothesis which stated there is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduate students towards the study of primary education studies in university of Ilorin on the basis of gender is hereby rejected. Female undergraduate with higher mean of 51.68 significantly differ in their attitude towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin.

HO₂ There is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of level of study.

Table 4: Summary of t-test showing the significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of level of study.

Level	N	X	SD	df	t. value	Sig.	Decision
300 Level	100	49.74	4.31	198	1.16	0.21	Not Significant
400 Level	100	51.26	4.18				

Sig. 0.21 > 0.05

From Table 4 above, result shows t value = 1.16, degree of freedom (198). The null hypothesis is not rejected since the significant value of 0.21 is greater than 0.05 Alpha level. This means that, undergraduate students' attitudes towards primary education studies is not different by their level of study. This implies that the attitude showed by undergraduates in lower level towards the study of primary education studies is not different from their counterparts from higher level. Therefore, the hypothesis above which stated there is no significant difference in the attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin on the basis of level of study is hereby accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

It is revealed from the findings that above average, 56.5% of the respondents have negative attitudes towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin in Kwara State. As it was seen from the responses, their negative attitudes towards primary education studies as a course could be as a result of their unawareness of the course before being given as a course of study or their wrong notion towards the course. It is a known fact that students' awareness of a particular course of study is a direct determinant of their attitudes towards the course. This assertion was in support of the submission of Egwu (2015), posited that one of the reasons primary education studies as a course is not usually considered by undergraduates is the perception that they will end up as teacher. She further revealed that students had a negative attitude towards the teaching profession. According to the researcher, it was because teaching was being perceived as a difficult task, and teachers were not well paid, compared to other professions.

Furthermore, it was revealed from the study that there is significant difference in the attitudes of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin in Kwara State on the basis of gender. This means that gender affects undergraduates' attitudes towards the study of primary education studies. This implies that the attitudes of female undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies is different from their male counterpart. This goes in line with the submission of Pepe and Özkurt (2016), who conducted a study on the attitude of university female and male students towards primary education studies. Their result revealed that students' attitudes towards primary education studies' classes were negative, but female students had more positive attitudes than male students.

In addition, it was revealed from the findings that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of undergraduate students towards the study of primary education studies university of Ilorin on the basis of level of study. This reveals that undergraduates in the University of Ilorin holds similar opinions about the study of primary education.

Conclusion

It was concluded that, there is negative attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in University of Ilorin. This is as a result of their low level of awareness about the course and their wrong notion about the course. Also, It was revealed from the findings that there is

significant difference in the negative attitude of undergraduate students towards the study of primary education studies in university of Ilorin on the basis of gender, and there is no significant difference in the negative attitude of undergraduates towards the study of primary education studies in university of Ilorin on the basis of level of study.

Recommendations

1. Students who meet up with the admission criteria should always be considered for their course of choice.
2. When students are being admitted for primary education studies as a course, proper orientation about the benefits of the course should be made known to them at their early stage.
3. Students' wrong notion about the primary education studies as a course should be reshaped through proper enlightenment, training and workshop through their level adviser, their course lecturers and the institution at the final year level.

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