



COURSE OUTLINES: A LEARNING TOOL FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT IAUE, PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The study examined course outlines as a learning tool that can be used for improving the academic performance of undergraduates. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria was used as a pilot for the research. The population was made up of all final year undergraduates of the institution, a total of 4,005 students. 200 final year students were randomly selected from each of the 6 faculties of the institution to form the sample of 1200 students (30% of population) that took part in the study. It was a correlational study with three research questions and one null hypothesis to guide the study. A self-developed questionnaire with reliability coefficient 0.82 and of a modified 4-point Likert style titled Questionnaire for Determining the Extent of Provision of Course Outlines to Undergraduates (QDEPCOU) was used as the instrument for the study. Means and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. While the students agreed that they were being provided with course outlines and that course outlines were very useful to them, the correlation coefficient r-value 0.047 was very low and showed no significant relationship between the provision of course outlines and the academic performance of students. The study recommended that the institution should keep up the good work of providing students with course outlines at the commencement of semesters and urged other institutions to emulate this excellent practice.

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INTRODUCTION

A course outline is a document that explains to students what the course is all about. It consists of the big ideas that will be covered in the course. With the information in the course outlines lecturers can set course goals, develop students' learning objectives, put in place a schedule for the course, create assessment plans and ensure that they are aligned to the course requirements. Thus course outlines act as guides to students because with them students are informed about what to expect and about the materials they will be engaged in ahead of time. As a schedule, it tells students what the lecturers expect of them and within what time frame students are supposed to show mastery of the content. Additionally, by the time the course is concluded, it is the documented evidence

that tells about the essential understandings students have taken away from the course/programme. A course outline is therefore a veritable tool that can be used to guide students' efforts in academic pursuits. When not available it could hamper students' progress especially in their attempts to improve their performance by additional personal effort. Academic programmes in higher education in Nigeria as with other countries of the world have prescribed duration. For this reason, a curriculum which contains all the courses required for mastery of each field is always developed to guide the implementation of each programme. A time frame is always prescribed within which the curriculum arrangements for the mastery of each field should be achieved. In Nigerian most universities operate the course credit system in which a specific number of courses are offered each semester. The course system according to Olarinoye (2006) is a curriculum organization in which the syllabi containing the subjects in the programmes are divided into courses in prescribed sections of teaching, learning and assessment. The topics to be taught in each of these courses are spread out in the 15-weeks duration of each semester and this in essence is what the Course outline

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is all about. Course outlines have varied uses in a university setting. To the entire university it is a reference material both to lecturers, administrators and accreditation committees who visit from time to time to know exactly what students are doing in the individual courses as well as in the overall professional areas. It is a pointer to what each lecturer is doing in each course and what they expect of their students. Furthermore, it determines and describes what skills students should have after completing the course. This is particularly helpful for prerequisite courses because they provide information about what skills and knowledge students already have which can be built upon and which ones are lacking. Finally, course outlines are very useful in defining course goals or objectives. Course goals are what course lecturers expect from students and what students can expect from the course. They are statements that express course expectations in measurable terms. The course goals/objectives are very valuable in the learning process and without them student successes cannot be measured. Whatever the goals, learners expect some outcomes at the end of the learning periods. Course outcomes can be explained to mean what the students ultimately come away with at the end of the course. Oftentimes there are gaps between what the lecturer hopes to achieve and what the students ultimately come away with. It is the desire of every educator that both course goals and students' outcomes match at the end of course offerings. Where gaps exist, various aspects of the teaching learning process may need to be revised to improve students' achievements. The 21st century has come with a lot of challenges which makes it imperative that students be more effective learners and also be able to acquire complex assortment of skills necessary for survival in the society. Relevant skills for survival and academic success that have been identified include:

-) Time management
-) Ability to prioritize
-) Multitasking
-) Varying strategies for studying and learning
-) Use of technology
-) Developing appropriate social skills
-) Maturity
-) Showing responsibility.

These skills enable students in the universities to plan adequately for the tasks and experiences of each session and also to learn to distribute time and resources wisely to areas where more learning is needed. They can also help students develop self-management skills to plan and monitor their learning and to appropriately compare performance to course objectives both at short and long term basis. All of these activities go a long way to promote individual students' academic performance all year round. This makes it then absolutely necessary that students be provided with course outlines as a guide to make them take ownership of their learning as they navigate through prescribed courses. Additionally, the 21st Century demands of education require a learning orientation with a keen focus on higher-order learning skills for students and with commensurate teaching/learning capacities of the educational institutions themselves to transform learners to meet global needs. This type of transformation has been defined by Watty (2006) to mean a unique, individually negotiated process between the teacher and the learner where the participant is transformed. For this reason, higher education has been said by many researchers to

be about transforming people and not just their knowledge. Not only must the personal identity of the student be transformed, higher education must also transform itself to meet the demands of a new economy (Harvey and Knight, 1996). Continuing in this thought, Popli in Bramming (2007) made a case for what might be called 'transformative' graduates, which he says requires a shift in the way education is currently approached. He believes education should move from merely providing information towards learning to where information is sought out by learners themselves for their professional development. This requires that learners be guided in the learning process and what better way to guide them than to provide them with course outlines so they can take more responsibility for their learning because they know what is expected of them.

Statement of Problem: One of the goals of university education is to promote competencies as well as increase the knowledge base of students. For this reason, most university programmes are based on multiple performance assessments and project-based learnings. This require that students construct their own understanding through more personal efforts and take more responsibility for their own learning. When this happens, students tend to show a lot of self-confidence and this is displayed in their attitude towards the various performance assessment processes and their subsequent performances. Observation however has shown that undergraduates are still very unsure of themselves, fearful of examinations and are ever ready to engage in all sorts of dubious ways to pass examinations. The level of absenteeism from general class activities are also observed to be quite high with more and more students only showing up in large numbers for quizzes and during final examinations. Thus class participation among students is very low and there is fear that if the situation persists that students' learnings might be negatively impacted leading to downward trends in students' achievements. This has informed the need for this study to determine the extent to which students are being provided with course outlines to enable them take more ownership of their academic pursuits using Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State as a case study. The main aim of the study was to determine whether students are being provided with course outlines and the extent to which the provision of course outlines have impact on the academic performance of the students. Specifically, the study sought to:

-) Determine to what extent course outlines are provided to undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH, at the commencement of the semesters.
-) How far into the semester is considered late for students to be provided with course outlines?
-) Identify the extent to which students believe that providing them with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance.
-) To determine if there is a significant relationship between undergraduates' possession of course outlines and their performance.

The study was guided by the following research questions

-) To what extent do course lecturers provide undergraduates with course outlines at the commencement of semesters at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH.

-) How far into the semester is considered late for undergraduates to receive course outlines for courses they are offering?
-) To what extent do students believe that being provided with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance?

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1 There is no significant relationship between the provision of course outlines for courses offered in the semester and the academic performance of undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH.

Theoretical and Conceptual Clarifications: The Constructivist Theory of Learning formed the theoretical basis of the study. Constructivism was born on the basis of Piaget's cognitive development and Vygotsky's structural theories (Sehundi and Purwarno (2018).

The term refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves. This means that each learner individually and socially constructs meaning to concepts as they learn. Constructing meaning by this approach is considered to be learning itself. Thus accepting the constructivist theory means that one is willing to follow in the paths of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and similar researchers. These researchers accept that there is no such thing as knowledge out there that is independent of the learner. But knowledge that exists is that which the learner constructs for themselves as they learn. The constructivist approach believes that learning is not understanding the "true" nature of things as has been presented by others but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the array of experiences from which learners fabricate knowledge for themselves. Hein (1991) explains that the constructivist theory requires that educators turn around by 180 degrees from the idea of describing nature as an all-encompassing machine to instead look towards learners and how each of them create their own model to explain nature. Thus in the constructivist position, educators are required to follow a pedagogy which argues that people must provide learners with the opportunity to interact with sensory data and construct their own world. Applying the constructivism approach is expected to open learners' curiosity.

The dramatic consequences of constructing meaning have been identified to be twofold and include:

-) The need to focus on the learner in thinking about learning;
-) And the understanding that there is no knowledge independent of the meaning attributed by experience and constructed by the learner or community of learners.

This thought is also buttressed in Hoy and Miskel's statement that constructivism puts students at the center of the teaching-learning process and the teacher in the direct role of assistant and coach. They also added that inquiry and problem-based learning are critical aspects of teaching in this approach. Thus this theory forms a good background for this study because it supports the thoughts that learners be given center place and be given all assistance to take responsibility for their learning. The course outline is one of the tools that can provide learners

with such freedom while pointing them to what they are expected to learn.

Essential Components of Course Outlines: The component parts of a course outline have been identified to include:

Assessment Overview: This is a grading guide which allows students to see what weightings are given to the different assessment elements of the course. It provides an overview of the grading and provides a grading scale which allows students to know how well they are performing. Students' learning objectives control what assessment plans are adopted and indicate what students will learn. Thus assessment plan states how lecturers will collect information about the extent of achievement of the objectives (University of Lethbridge, 2010). Details to be found in assessment plans can include:

-) The type of assessments that will be used within the course structure;
-) How they will be marked;
-) How they will provide evidence of student learning.

Most assessment plans contain multiple assessments and this increases evidence finding on multiple outcomes. In the Nigerian educational system, assessment plans for each course consist of continuous assessment and the final examination. Assessment plans work side by side with course activities. This means that whatever the tasks to be mastered, the activities scheduled must prepare students for the assessment in those areas.

A typical course outline contains the following sections:

-) Purpose of the course;
-) Major information/skills to be taught or learned, which is also sometimes called schedule of activities;
-) And lastly how learning will be assessed, also referred to as assessment plan. Assessment plans could consist of the continuous assessment options of:
-) Quizzes; examples of which can be essay types, multiple choice, open book, etc.
-) Assignments which could be individual or group-based.
-) and the final examination which usually comes at the end of the course.

The weighting and grading scales that each of these aspects will carry would be identified for the students so that they would understand what level of performance is considered a pass grade.

Schedule of Activities: It is important to first identify how students will be assessed because from that point it is easier to construct activities that will facilitate the learning that students need to have in order to achieve the course objectives. When course activities are in tandem with assessment plans, the course outcomes are easier to assess.

Reading List: The course outline helps lecturers to prepare an appropriate reading list. This could simply include the following:

-) A reference to the prescribed textbook(s).
-) Links to online readable materials relevant to the course.

-) Academic journal and any other text as the lecturer may recommend.

A reading list helps students to gather or make purchases ahead of the course schedule. It also helps students and others such as administrators and other educators to see what content are covered within the course.

The Process of Developing Course Outlines: The process of developing a course outline as have been identified by several researchers is a reflective exercise. The lecturers carefully take into consideration the following ingredients:

-) Their philosophy of teaching;
-) Why the course is important;
-) How the course fits into the discipline;
-) What topics will be covered.

The expectations for the course are clearly spelt out so that everyone is aware of what they should or should not do. When well-articulated, the process of developing a course outline is enlightening and could add to the benefits accrued from the course. This is because a lot of time is taken to select and align its various components. Even though the course outline serves as a guide to both students and lecturers, in it the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of lecturers about the subject matter are made obvious. If the lecturers are passionate about the subject, it will manifest in the tasks that are selected for inclusion in the course outline. Woolcock (2003) explained that the quality of the course outline is a fairly reliable indicator of the quality of teaching and learning that will take place in a course. For this reason, Woolcock advises that lecturers should make effort to construct high-quality course outlines since what they construct is a reflection of their belief about quality. Thus the lecturers' own philosophies about teaching can be judged from what aspects of the course outline they emphasize. The experience and maturity of lecturers can also be deduced from the content of the course outline because experienced and more mature lecturers are likely to be very particular about certain aspects of the content as against the less experienced or newly recruited ones.

The Roles of Course Outlines

A number of researchers have highlighted the roles course outlines play in educational programmes. Davis (1993) said that the course outline:

-) Provides a solid beginning to the semester
-) Sets the tone for the course
-) Provides a conceptual framework for the course
-) Becomes a resource that is referred to over the course of the semester
-) Shows students how seriously the lecturer takes the course
-) Is the contract between lecturers and students as far as the course is concerned.

Altman and Cashin (2003) in their own contributions explained that course outlines serve the following purposes:

-) Let's students know what the course is about.
-) Why the course is taught
-) Where it is going and

-) What will be required for students to be successful in the course.

This makes the course outline a personal tool that students can use to enhance their individual attempts to improve educational outcomes and also a professional document for both lecturers and students to guide academic work.

Purposes of a Course Outline: Parkes and Harris (2010) describe the three major purposes that a course outline serves as:

-) Course outline serves as a contract.
-) Course outline serve as a permanent record
-) Course outline serve as a learning tool.

Course outline as Contract: When the course outline is looked at as the contract between the lecturers and students, it makes explicit the responsibilities of the lecturers and the students (Grunert, 1997). It is also the document by which classroom practices, expectations and norms are codified and any ambiguity of meanings within the context of the course are clarified. For these reasons developing the course outline is a serious step and requires careful consideration on the part of practitioners. Grunert threw more light on this when he explained further that lecturers take a scholarly reflection about teaching when they design a course. This is because with them, they make plans, select strategies and eventually pen them down into written documents that can be kept. Adding to the thoughts about requiring careful reflection, McKeachie, (1999) explained that this could be in respect to aspects such as:

-) What topics will be covered.
-) When assignments will be due.
-) When examinations will be administered and
-) What objectives will be reached.

Thus for students the course outline provides security in knowing the direction the course will follow and the expectations of the lecturer.

Course Outline as a Permanent Record: In almost all cases, institutions require that information on what goes on in the teaching learning interface be documented in one form or another for various uses. For example, during accreditation exercises of both individual programmes and whole institutions, numerous documents are sought for as evidence to show effectiveness to attract possible approvals. Part of these are details about the courses and this could include the following:

-) what was covered
-) what students were expected to do and
-) how the outcomes and performances were assessed, etc.

It is not uncommon to use information provided about these areas to evaluate both individuals and entire programmes. Such evidence will provide answers to issues about the programmes such as:

-) if lecturers were mindful of the levels of students in the courses?
-) assessing lecturers teaching abilities and

-) determining if courses contained information about topics that are appropriate in terms of both scope and depth, etc.

Additional uses could be in situations where students wish to transfer to other institutions to complete their programmes in such institutions. In that case students could use the evidence of what is contained in course outlines as a documentation of what was covered at each level and the scope or depth of coverage.

Course outline as a Learning Tool: Research has shown that course outlines are highly effective facilitators of students' learning. There is a growing realization that students learn a lot outside the four walls of the classrooms at the university level. While students learn a lot by directly interacting with their lecturers in the classrooms, however, some recent studies have shown that students learn more these days by reading, writing, researching and discussing outside the normal classroom experience. It is not possible for lecturers to be personally available to guide all of students' learning at all times. Thus a course outline that is well articulated and all-embracing can be a veritable tool for students due to the fact that it can provide information capable of assisting students to take control of their learning. Additionally, there are noticeable effects of technological improvements in the modes of delivery of instruction this 21st Century which should ideally lead to improved student outcomes but observations have shown that this is however not the case. One reason given for this observation is that some of these technological interventions require more individualized student's involvements, which more often than not demands that students work for extended periods by themselves. This further brings out the need for them to be provided with course outlines as tools to guide learning. Recognizing this students' position, Kelly (2008) explained that students are actually the ones in charge of their success or lack of it in courses in higher education. The reason he gave is that students are the ones doing the learning because they are old enough to make choices for themselves.

Kelly added that what lecturers can do is to lay out the criteria for success which could include:

-) what a student must know and be able to do by the end of the course;
-) offer descriptive feedback which can describe "where students are and what they need to do to get to where they need to be, etc.

But that the final choice of success or failure is determined by the students. In conclusion, Kelly counsels that students should be made to come to terms with the fact that academic success is not a function of ability only. That the bright students do not necessarily have big brains and those who are not bright, small brains but that the variable that determines success in higher education is not brain size but how hard that brain gets worked. Kelly recommends that lecturers should get students started by challenging them to work hard, to spend twice as much time on their projects than they usually would do, spend time to seek additional information even if it is just so they can see that hard work does makes a difference. From the foregoing, it is obvious that at the university level, students are more responsible for their learnings than at other levels. What the lecturers should do is to provide leadership and support to create and sustain a climate that promotes learning. A course

outline is one of those features of a support system that can make students assume more responsibility for their learnings.

Population, Sample and Sampling technique: The population for the study consisted of all final year undergraduate students in all the six faculties of the University with a figure of 4,005 students. The final year students have spent a minimum of 3years (6 semesters) in the university and as such are in a position to provide information on various aspects of the university practices that involves students. A sample of 1200 students was selected using the simple random sampling technique to select 200 students from each of the 6 faculties in the university. A self-developed questionnaire titled Questionnaire to Determine the Provision of Course Outlines as a Tool for Learning among Undergraduates (QDPCOTLAU) was used as an instrument for data collection. It was developed using a modified Likert scale with response options of Very high extent (VHE), High extent (HE), Low extent (LE) and Very low extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three lecturers in the department of Educational Management, considered to be experts in the field. A test-retest method was used involving 10 students outside the sampled group to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument. The results from the exercise were correlated using the Spearman Product Moment Correlation and a coefficient of 0.82 was obtained.

RESULTS

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent do course lecturers provide undergraduates with course outlines at the commencement of semesters at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH?

Table 1. Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of provision of Course outlines at Commencement of Semester

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	We are always provided with course outlines by our lecturers at the beginning of each course	1200	3.32	0.65	Very high extent
2	More than 70% of the lecturers do not provide course outlines to students	1200	2.30	0.91	Low extent
3	Up to 75% of the lecturers provide course outlines to the students	1200	2.98	0.98	High extent
4	Only very few lecturers provide course outlines to students	1200	2.60	0.99	Low extent
	Grand mean			2.80	

Table 1 shows a mean response of 3.32 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5. This can be interpreted to mean that to a very high extent, lecturers at the university provide the students with course outlines at the beginning of each course. Similar opinions are also expressed in items 1-4 with mean ratings of 2.30, 2.98 and 2.60 all pointing to the fact that up to 75% of the lecturers provide students with course outline. In response to research question one, to a large extent course lecturers provide undergraduates with course outlines at the commencement of semesters at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH.

Table 2. Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on how far into the Semester is late for Provision of Course outlines

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
5	Half-way into the semester is considered late for the provision of course outlines	1200	3.36	0.86	Very high extent
6	Course outlines not provided within the first two weeks of the semester is considered late because it will not help the students much	1200	3.18	0.84	Very high extent
7	Course outlines can be provided even up to the day of the examinations	1200	1.76	1.05	Low Extent
8	Provision of course outlines after the examinations is the only time it can be considered late	1200	2.61	1.27	Low extent
Grand Mean		2.22			

Research Question Two: How far into the semester is considered late for undergraduates to receive course outlines for courses they are offering? Table 2 shows students' responses to the question of how far into the semester is considered late for providing course outlines. Item 5 shows a mean rating of 3.36 and indicates that to a very high extent, students accept that half-way into the semester is late for providing course outlines. Item 6 with a mean of 3.18, indicates that course outlines are provided within the 1st two weeks of the semester. Items 7 and 8 with means 1.76 and 2.61 respectively indicates that students accept that course outlines should not be provided during or after examinations. In answer to research question two to a large extent beyond half-way into the semester is considered late for providing course outlines to students.

Research Question Three: To what extent do students believe that being provided with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance?

Table Showing Mean Ratings of Impact of Course Outlines on Students' Performance

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
9	Course outlines if provided will help students know what the course is all about	1200	3.67	0.69	Very high extent
10	Course outlines if provided helps students to study ahead in order to cover the topics for the course	1200	3.64	0.71	Very high extent
11	Course outlines help students to evaluate themselves throughout the semester	1200	3.59	0.67	Very high extent
12	When students have course outlines it helps them plan their study time well	1200	3.58	0.79	Very high extent
Grand Mean		3.62			

Table 3 shows a grand mean of 3.62 and a high extent acceptance of all items in the clusters. This indicates that the students all accept that course outlines are useful to them to know what the course is about, to study ahead, to evaluate themselves throughout the semester and to plan their study time.

In answer to research question three to a very high extent students believe that being provided with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance.

Hypothesis: Ho1 There is no significant relationship between the provision of course outlines for courses offered in the semester and the academic performance of undergraduates at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH.

Table 4. Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Provision of Course Outlines and Impact on Academic Performance of Undergraduates

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Impact of provision of course outline on academic performance of undergraduates	14.4646	1.98559	1200
Extent of provision of course outlines to undergraduates	22.1015	3.00994	1200

Table 5. Showing a Summary of PPMC Test of Relationship Between Provision of Course Outlines and Undergraduates Academic Performance

Correlations			
		Impact of provision of course outline on academic performance of undergraduates	Extent of provision of course outlines to undergraduates
Extent of provision of course outlines to undergraduates	Pearson Correlation	.047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.087	
	N	1200	1200

Table 5 shows a r-value of 0.047 at 0.087 level of significance. The r-value is not significant therefore the null hypotheses is accepted. Thus there is no significant relationship between the provision of course outlines on the academic performance of undergraduates at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analysis of the data generated, I was found that:

-) That to a very high extent students believe that being provided with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance.
-) That to a large extent half-way into the semester is considered late for providing course outlines to students.
-) That to a large extent course lecturers provide undergraduates with course outlines at the commencement of semesters at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, PH.
-) There is no significant relationship between the provision of course outlines and the academic performance of undergraduates at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Results clearly show that the lecturers at this university provide their undergraduates with course outlines at the beginning of each course.

As many as up to 75% of the lecturers provide students with course outlines and this is mostly done at the commencement of semesters. This is a good practice and the institution should be encouraged to keep up the good work. The institution is acting in line with the advice of Kelly (2008) who said that all necessary tools should be provided to help students take more responsibility for their learning in order to improve their academic performance. The findings also showed that the students generally accepted that half-way into the semester is late for providing course outlines. This means that course outlines must be provided on time if they must be useful to students. Course outlines provided during or after examinations, the students agreed are no longer useful because there is no longer any need to know what the course is about, to study ahead, to be able evaluate ones' self throughout the semester or plan study time. The semesters are already over by the time examinations are taken. Furthermore, the students generally accepted that being provided with course outlines have a positive impact on their academic performance. However, testing the null hypothesis did not confirm this. Surprisingly the correlation showed that provision of course outlines did not significantly impact the students' academic performance. This finding appear to be at variance with the general notion that the provision of course outlines to undergraduates will significantly impact on their academic performance. It is a good practice though to provide the students with course outlines at the commencement of semesters to guide them to know what is expected of them and for good time management. The institution should not relent despite this results, but should be encouraged to keep up this practice and other institutions who are not already doing so, should be encouraged to espouse this behaviour.

Conclusion

The study started out with the assumption that the low performance observed among undergraduates could be due to the fact that they may not be provided with course outlines as they should or maybe they are provided but not on time. Which could limit students from knowing what is expected of them and to also have them as guides with which to navigate their courses of study at the universities. Findings of this study have however shown that the provision of course outlines to undergraduates do not significantly impact on their academic performance despite the fact that the students accept that it does. In conclusion. It appears that practitioners should look beyond this study to identify the intervening variables that are responsible for the observed low academic performance among undergraduates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends as follows:

-) The university management should continue to insist that lecturers should continue to make course outlines available to undergraduates at the commencement of semesters.

-) Course outlines are legal contract documents between lecturers and students, thus extra care should be put in their preparation to reflect the importance of the courses and the philosophies of learning in the universities.
-) Society and knowledge is dynamic therefore content of courses and course outlines should be dynamic to reflect societal needs and aspirations.

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