



New Intake Adaptation to School Routines and Academic Performance in Universities in South- South, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Moving into a new school environment can be a difficult experience for new students, with many challenges affecting their academics, emotional and social development. This study aimed to investigate the new intake adaptation experiences, identify the challenges that affected their academic performance such as adjusting to new curriculum, socialization, getting acquainted with school physical layout among others, the study developed new strategies to facilitate a smoother transition which includes orientation programmes, mentorship, welcome pack and others. A mixed -method approach was employed, including focus groups and oral interview with students, teachers, and parents. The study applied Social Identity theory by Tajfel & Turner, (1986) which explained how individuals develops a sense of belonging and identity in a new environment, new group, and new system such as school. The findings revealed that the challenges are related to academic, social and emotional adjustment. Based on the findings it was suggested that a comprehensive support framework should be developed such as mentorship programmes, orieknatation programmes, amongst others to promote and enhance academic success.

INTRODUCTION

Every growing school gets new intake at the beginning of any new academic year, semester or term, it refers to the process of admitting and enrolling a group of students into the educational institution. The new intake may include students who are entering the school for the first time, as well as those who are transferring from other schools or programs. Schools employ various strategies to facilitate the smooth transition of new students, including orientation programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and academic support services. By implementing effective intake adaptation practices, schools can help new students adjust to their new surroundings, build relationships with peers and teachers, and achieve academic success. (Anjorin-Ojewole, 2023). New intake adaptation in schools is the creation of a welcoming and inclusive environment for new students. Schools may organize orientation programs to familiarize new students with the school facilities, policies, and procedures. These programs can help alleviate anxiety and uncertainty among new students by providing them with essential information about their new school environment. Another important strategy for supporting new students is the implementation of peer mentoring programs. Peer mentors are typically older students who volunteer to guide and support new students during their transition period. Peer mentors can offer valuable insights, advice, and emotional support to help new students navigate the challenges of adjusting to a new school. Orientation programs and peer mentoring initiatives. These services may include tutoring programs, study skills workshops, and counseling services to address any academic or personal challenges that new students may face. Effective intake adaptation in schools plays a vital role in promoting the well-being and academic success of new students. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, schools can help new students feel valued, connected, and empowered to thrive in their educational journey. Educators play a vital role in supporting students during the adaptation period by providing guidance, encouragement, and resources to help them navigate the challenges of transitioning into a new school environment. By creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, teachers can help ease students' anxieties and facilitate their integration into the school community. The process of adapting to school routines is a critical aspect of students' educational journey that can significantly impact their academic performance and overall well-being. By recognizing the challenges that students face during this transition period and providing them with the necessary support and resources, educators can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in school. Improving academic performance requires a holistic approach that addresses both internal and external factors influencing a student's ability to learn effectively. This may involve setting clear goals, creating a conducive study environment, seeking help when needed, managing time efficiently, staying motivated and focused on learning goals academic performance is a multifaceted concept that reflects a student's ability to grasp and apply knowledge effectively in an educational setting. It serves as an important indicator of a student's progress and performance throughout their academic journey.

Statement of the problem

Irrespective of the efforts to support students so many are still facing challenges adapting to a new school environment, which has led to a decline in academic performance, the existing support strategies don't seem to be adequate in addressing the various challenging issues faced by new intake. The

adaptation of new intakes to school routines and its impact on academic performance is a critical aspect of student time in higher education institutions such as Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE). Understanding how new students adjust to the academic environment, social dynamics, and daily routines can provide valuable insights into enhancing their overall academic performance and well-being. Considering the nature of the environment, lack of facilities such as classrooms, office space and the uncoordinated siting of structures without proper or adequate provision for students, this study has become imperative to investigate the challenges faced by new intakes at IAUE in adapting to school routines and how this adaptation influences their academic performance and develop an effective support strategies to help them transit and improve in academics.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by new intake in adapting to a new school environment. The study specifically investigates the following:

1. The adaptation experience of new intake students in universities in Rivers State
2. To identify the factors that influences the academic performance of new intake students in universities Rivers State
3. To identify the new intake adaptation strategies
4. To examine the relationship between adaptation and academic performance among new intake student in universities in Rivers State

Research Questions

1. What are the new intake adaptations experiences in universities in Rivers State
2. What are the factors that influences the academic performance of new intake students in Rivers State
3. Is there a relationship between the adaptation and academic performance among new intake students in the universities in Rivers State
4. What are the relationship between adaptation and academic performance among new intake student in universities in Rivers State

Literature Review

Adaptation and new intake

Adaptation is the process one undergoes to adjust to a new environment or changes with time, it is the adjustment from one point to fit into another. In the context of this study it is the process the new intake follow to adjust to teaching methods, learning materials, learning environment and learning instructions to meet their desired needs at school.

The process of new intake in schools typically involves several steps. First, prospective students may submit applications for admission, which are then reviewed by the school's admissions committee. (Baard, Rench and Kozlowski, 2014)The committee considers various factors such as academic performance, extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, and personal statements. Once students are accepted, they may need to complete additional paperwork, such as enrollment forms and medical records. Orientation sessions are often held to familiarize new students with the school's policies, facilities, and resources. During the new intake process, schools may also assess students' academic abilities through placement tests or interviews. This helps determine appropriate class placements and support services for individual students. Schools may also provide guidance and counseling services to help new students. The new intake in schools is an important event that sets the stage for students' educational experiences. It marks the beginning of a new chapter in their academic journey and offers opportunities for growth, learning, and social development. New intake adaptation to school routines refers to the process through which students, particularly those transitioning into a new educational environment or level, adjust to the daily schedules, expectations, and academic demands of their school. This adaptation period can have a significant impact on students' overall academic performance and well-being. Students enter a new school or grade level, they are faced with unfamiliar routines, teachers, classmates, and academic challenges. The adjustment period can vary in length and intensity depending on the individual student's personality, prior experiences, and support systems. Some students may adapt quickly and thrive in their new environment, while others may struggle to find their footing and experience difficulties in academics. (Baard, Rench & Kozlowski 2014). Adapting to school routines is crucial for students' academic success as it allows them to establish effective study habits, time management skills, and relationships with teachers and peers. Students who are able to adapt successfully tend to perform better academically, feel more confident in their abilities, and have higher levels of motivation and performance in their learning.

Adaptation experiences and challenges of new intake

The new intake faces a lot of challenges while trying to adapt to new school environment and this challenges has contributed negatively to their academic performance during their first school year.

Getting acquainted with school physical layout: The location of the classrooms, lecture halls, where is the department , where is the faculty and so on, the library, the laboratory and so on, finding this facilities becomes a contributing factor to poor academic performance because by the time the students locates the classroom two or more lecture time would have gone. Research has shown that students who are conversant with the school environment tend to: feel more comfortable and confident, have more spatial awareness, navigate skills, be more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, have improves cognitive functioning memory, and have reduced stress, (Oruikor, Adenyi, & Oladele, 2023)

To get acquainted with school physical layout, the new intake need to take a tour round the campus, explore different building and classrooms, try to identify key locations and routes to library, cafeteria, and sports complex. They need to be acquainted with rest rooms, and other essentials facilities, ensure they familiarize themselves with the layout of the school yard and playground.

When they are able to know the school layout it help the them to better navigate the campus, save time and reduce stress, feel more connected to their school community, improve their overall academic performance.

Adjusting to new curriculum: learning new subjects, being taught by new teachers, new curriculum, adapting to new methods of teachings and the expectations is a great deal to cope with. This can be very challenging for the new intake. They have to adjust to understanding the new learning objectives and outcomes, familiarize themselves with new textbooks and resource materials, adapting to new teaching methods assessment method, trying to develop skills to meet up the criteria for the new curriculum, building new confidence in navigating the curriculum, trying to manage the emotional and psychological impact of change, harmonizing with the teachers and peers to share knowledge best practices, the ability to stay organized and manage time effectively to meet new challenges. (Anjorin- Ojewole, 2023),

Strategies to help new intake adapt to new curriculum include:

Receiving guidance and mentorship from teachers, encourage collaborative learning, through the use of technology and digital resources to improve learning, providing additional support to students with difficulties in adapting, encourage them to always reflect and take self-assessment, encourage and celebrate successes, try to redefine the curriculum to meet student needs and encourage feedback and continuous assessment.

Socialization: University is quite different, it is more or less an island, it is people oriented, different people from different background with individual lifestyle, in a new environment you have make new friends, belong to social groups. If you are not careful the social dynamics of the university environment takes the order of the day in your life, the extra curriculum will make a path in a student life more than the academic life.

Emotional Challenges: The anxiety of being in a new academic environment, being homesick like being away from family for the first time, changing to a new home and adjusting to a new situation, and the stress associated with transition is a big challenge for the new intake. Talk about fear of the unknown, new environment, and high expectations, the stress associated with adaptation to new academic demands, pressure, time management, feeling uncertain about abilities and fitting in, fear of failure, concern about not meeting expectations or making mistakes, managing new responsibilities, schedules, social dynamics, difficulty connecting with peers or the outsiders, adjusting to new roles and responsibilities, adapting to new cultural norms, values and beliefs. The above can impact students' life style, their mental health and academic performance, these challenges can be addressed through: Orientation programmes, counselling services, peer mentoring, support groups, academic advising, social events and activities, parent and family engagement, mindfulness and self-care initiatives fostering a sense of community and belonging.

TIME Management: It is not very comfortable to balance academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities and meeting up with the high academic expectations, adjusting from usual time and the comfort of your usual life style. It is an important factor for new intake to adapt to. It is important to create a daily schedule, such planning your day, week, and month before time. Also creating specific time for classes, study sessions, assignments, and personal activities will make so much impact in the lives of the new intake. Prioritizing task is another way by identifying the most important ones and handle them swiftly, categorize the task into the most important and focus on them. They can also use planner or calendar by writing down their task and giving deadlines, this strategy will help to be organized. Setting boundaries such as learning how to refuse some unimportant activities can go a long way to make them focused, set boundaries with friends and family to help them study. Breaking task into chunks and avoiding procrastination can also help them achieve the task easily, focusing on one task and not multitasking can lead them out of distractions and increased productivity. Finally it is also good to learn to review and adjust regularly their schedule and task list. When theses method are followed strictly new intakes will be able to develop effective time management, skills, reduce stress, perform efficiently in academics

Coping with unwanted behaviours: Meeting a lot of people with different upbringing, University is comprised of people with all manner of behavior, one can faces harassment, bullying and tolerate a lot of unwanted behavior in trying to cope, with this, one can go through a lot of emotional trauma and academic set back is the resultant effect though every student may not have same experience. This is very challenging foe new intake though if they remain calm, composed, when they are faced with provocation, it can help to de-escalate tension in them. Other strategies are to cope with unwanted behaviours is to set boundaries with the one that is displaying that behavior. Be empathetic, try to understand the persons perspective and why, we should understand that people most times act out their problem so, trying to understand them will help us not to take it personal with them, using "I" statement instead of you to express our feeling will be better and son. Coping with unwanted behavior requires patience, empathy, and effective communication.

Higher Academic Expectation: Academic expectation has to change, both families and friends are expecting an increased academic achievement and results, your behaviours, intelligent, thinking, reasoning, needs and expectation are all expected to be on the increase the effort to meet up is stressful. Expectations make a lot impact on students, their motivation, self-esteem and their entire academic performances are impacted. In this regard what they need to this, they have set academic goals that are achievable, to achieve this, they need to go beyond their comfort zone. Another way is to celebrate the success achieved by other student to motivate him and challenge others, allow the students to take ownership of their studies and make informed decisions. They have to see and accept challenges for growth.

New intake Adaptation Strategies

Adaptation strategies assist new intake to succeed and achieve their goal of being in the new environment (school), every students has a different transition challenge so be patient and responsive would help the new intake.

1. **Orientation Programme:** This will help the new intake to familiarize with the school, students, school facilities, policies, rules and expectations. It will keep them abreast with the school culture and environmental values. What are the don'ts and does of the school, the administrative and academic structure. (Alvarez, Salas and Garofano, 2004)
2. **Mentorship:** To help the new intake navigate the school with ease, they have to be provided with a mentor. (Argote, 2013) mentorship adaptation strategies is valuable for coping with academic expectations, it provides students with guidance, support, role modelling, networking skilled development, feedback, accountability, career exploration and sense of belonging feeling among in the environment reduces the feelings of being isolated. By being mentored, students can navigate academic expectations and development for skills, confidence and resilience required to succeed.
3. **Welcome pack:** This pack should contain the school policies and rules, faculty and departmental handbook for directions, map showing the various facilities pointing from the administrative block to the learning environment, it should contain the names of principal officers of the school, faculty and department.

The requirement for graduation, including the numbers of course to offer, grade point and total grade point per session and so on, curriculum and extra curriculum activities.

4. **Social Programmes:** This programmes will allow the students to meet their peers and make friends, build relationships. Programmes such as inter faculty and department sports competition, vice chancellors trophy competitions, picnics, movie nights, school fares etc.
5. Encourage interactions between new families by calling for Parent Teachers meetings. And PTA should be allowed to organize programmes too.
6. **Counselling services:** it is important to provide counselling services to help the new intake cope, ask questions and clear their confusions. It is an important strategies to help students cope with academics. It will give them the opportunity to discuss their feelings, concerns and others. They will have access to therapy and psychological services, learn about stress management and academic pressure and son on.
7. **Peer group support:** students can meet their fellow students who have passed through the same challenge to get solutions from their experiences. (Anugwon, &Anugwon 2023) by leveraging peer support new intake will develop sense of belonging, build relationships, gain support and encourage, to succeed. They build per groups through study, academic clubs, social programmes, online forums and peer mentoring programmes.
8. Academic support: extra learning periods through tutorial to help new intake especially those who joined late due to some reasons, there should be tutorial to help them adjust to the curriculum.

Signs and direction signals: Things like small sign post directing people to various areas of the school would be of immense help to the new intake, it save time searching for classrooms, lecturer's office building and so. Even lecture time should be pasted on the notice. It helps them to navigate through school and provide other support.

Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to how well a student is achieving in their studies measured by grades, test scores, and overall educational performance. It encompasses various aspects such as attendance, participation in class, completion of assignments, understanding of the subject matter, critical thinking skills, and overall knowledge retention. Academic performance is influenced by a combination of internal factors (such as motivation, study habits, and intelligence) and external factors (such as family support, socio-economic status, school environment, and teaching quality and teaching methods). Impact academic performance positively or negatively. For instance, students who are motivated, organized, and have good study habits tend to perform better academically. On the other hand, external factors like difficulty in locating the lectures halls, being unaware of lecture times, un able to locate other students, being home sick, adjusting to new environment, family issues, financial problems, health concerns, or lack of access to educational resources can hinder academic performance. Additionally, the quality of teaching and the learning environment at school also play a crucial role in determining academic success.

Factors that influences academic performance of new intake

A lot of factors can affect the academic performance of new intake students in at any school levels which includes:

1. Prior academic success: their previous academic achievement can make impact on their performance.
2. Self-Motivation: The goals, the interest and the motivation they have can drive their academic effort to success.
3. Family foundation: if they have supportive parents, siblings and some moral home upbringing it can also impact the academic success.
4. School and learning environment: the quality of teaching they receive, the nature of their classroom, and the available resource material are also important factors

5. Peer pressure: the kind of friends, classmates they mixes up with can affect them negatively in academics.
6. Teachers support: the teachers teaching styles, guidance, feedback, encouragement and acceptance can boost their understanding.
7. Time Management :A well-organized organization with time management ski and ability has the ability to help the new intake balance workload
8. Learning strategies methods: the styles of learning for individuals, such as note taking, self-assessment and evaluation can be of help to the student

Many more factor like the student level language proficiency, socio-economic factor and emotional wellbeing which when they interact with each other in a complex manner can shape the academic performance of the new intake students.

Measures of academic performance

1. **Grades:** The scores, such as the letter grades, numerical grades indicating their level understanding in a particular subject or courses.
2. **Grade Point Average (GPA):** This provides the overall average grade of academic performance at the end of the semester or term
3. Standardized Test: this scores on exams, , specific test, evaluation of knowledge and skills
4. Assignments and projects: this done during the teaching and after the teaching to test the level of understanding applicability of concepts.
5. Class participation and engagement: This is the level of activeness and involve in classroom
6. Progress report: This is the process of highlighting the regular updates on student progress in the area of strength and areas of involvement.
7. Motivation strategies: This includes academic awards, recognition for outstanding achievements, it could come from deans office, department, individuals, organizations and the School as a whole as awards of excellence.

Measures to improve academic performance for new intake

For the new intake to meet up with their equals in their new school. They must:

1. Set clear goals and targets for themselves
2. Develop effective study habit, they must maintain a routine that would be of help instead of whiling away time on extra curriculum
3. They must stay organized and know how to manage their time
4. Engage actively in class during and after class
5. Practice active and good learning habit and culture
6. Stay motivated and focused would help a lot.
7. Aspire to grow, this should be our mindset
8. Always ask question where you don't understand
9. Engage in positive competition, don't give up easily but accept failures as an opportunities to do better.

Theoretical Frame Work

Social Identity theory by Tajfel &Turner, (1986) this theory explains how individuals develops a sense of belonging and identity in a new environment, new group, and new system such as school. It is understood that students go through a transition when joining a new school, through you can understand the emotional and psychological changes they experience during this transition and this changes are what affects their academic performance.

There is need for new intake to have a sense of belonging and identity within their new school community, this theory helps know how they form relationships and become part of the environment quickly. The school environment being a part of the school is a microsystem that affects the students' adaptation. The theory considers the effects of school policies, teachers teaching quality and teaching methods, peers and so on as some of the factors affecting the new intake adaptation. When we understand this challenges we will be able to devise strategies to support new intake to adapt to the system and improve in their academics.

Findings of the Study

Adapting to new school routines and academic demands can be a challenging transition for students entering a university. Universities in South- South are no exception, as incoming students may face various adjustments in terms of academic workload, social interactions, and overall university life. Research on new intake adaptation to school routines and its impact on academic performance is crucial in understanding how universities can support students during this critical period.

When students transit from high school to university, they often encounter differences in teaching styles, assessment methods, and expectations. This adjustment period can influence their academic performance and overall well-being. Factors such as time management skills, study habits, social integration, and stress management play a significant role in how well students adapt to the new environment. Studying the adaptation of new intakes to school routines and its effects on academic performance could involve conducting surveys, interviews, or longitudinal studies. By examining the challenges faced by incoming students and identifying strategies that promote successful adaptation, educators and administrators can implement targeted interventions to support student success. Understanding the experiences of new intakes at IAUE can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of current orientation programs, academic support services, and campus resources. By addressing the needs of incoming students early on, universities can enhance retention rates, improve graduation outcomes, and foster a positive learning environment for all members of the academic community. Investigating how new intake adaptation to school routines influences academic performance of Universities in South- South is essential for enhancing student success and promoting a culture of continuous improvement within Nigeria.

Conclusion

Adapting to new school routines and academic demands can be a challenging process for new intakes in Universities in South- South. The transition from secondary school to university involves not only academic adjustments but also social and personal changes. Research suggests that students who are able to effectively adapt to the new environment, establish good study habits, seek support when needed, and engage in extracurricular activities tend to perform better academically. Additionally, the university's support systems, such as orientation programs, counseling services, and academic advising, play a crucial role in helping new intakes navigate the challenges they may face. It is important for South-South universities to continue providing resources and support for new intakes to ensure a smoother transition and successful academic performance. By fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, encouraging student engagement, and offering guidance and assistance when needed, South- South Universities can help new intakes thrive both academically and personally. Finally, the adaptation of new intakes to school routines in Universities in South- South is a multifaceted process that requires collaboration between students, schools, faculties, and support services. With the right tools and support in place, new intakes can successfully navigate the challenges of transitioning to university life and achieve their academic goals.

Area of study

The South- South region is also known as the Niger Delta, is a geopolitical zone comprising six states Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo and Rivers. This zone is characterized with rich cultural heritage and 40 ethnic groups with over 250 distinct languages spoken. They are rich in oil, gas and mineral deposits. The South-South region has a rich history, culture and plenty potential for development, though they have their unique challenges that require thoughtful solutions to ensure brighter future.

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