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Distance Education Students' use of Activities in their Self-Instructional Modules: The Case of Distance Education Students of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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Abstract

The study explored the effectiveness or otherwise of the in-built activities in the course manuals given to DE students of the University of Education in supporting their learning. Adopting the sequential mixed method design, 156 respondents were purposively selected from two study centres of the University. Data were collected using questionnaire and interview guides. Percentages and the thematic approach formed the analytical frame. It came out strongly from the study that almost all students attempted answering the in-text activities in the course modules supplied to them. Issues like inability to manage their time, laziness, and absence of video footage on some of the activities prevented them from getting involved completely in the activities. Further, pressure from schoolwork, as most of them were teachers, and difficulty in understanding some concepts were some of their challenges. The activities, on the other hand, supported DE students to learn effectively, even though some of the activities were very challenging. It was concluded that a number of factors combine to influence how an individual is likely to respond to an activity. These include time constraints, level of difficulty of concepts, nature of the activity and the mode of delivery. It is therefore recommended, among others that the modules need reviewing to include activities that seek the opinion of learners, with most of the concepts well explained.

Keywords: Distance Education Students, Self-Instructional Materials, Tutorial in Print, Reflective Action Guide, Usage of Activities

Introduction

All self-instructional materials the world over, possess one common characteristic: they all contain activities. That is, they all pose questions in the text inviting the learner to respond in some way. "The activities posed in both national and international self-instructional materials vary considerably in the modes of the teaching they adopt, the lay-out and design, the demands they make and the way they are flagged in the text" (Lockwood, 1992:22). These activities are given different names in different contexts. They are variously referred to as in-text questions (ITQs, self-assessment questions (SAQs). In the USA, the terms 'adjunct aid' and 'embedded

questions' may be used. However, in this paper, the term 'activity' will be used to encompass all the above terms.

Self-instructional materials owe their method, to those who developed programmed learning following the Second World War. The teachers and trainers were greatly influenced by psychologist B.F. Skinner and his model of the learning process based on operant conditioning (Lockwood 1992). The writers attempted to lay the sequence of a student's learning in precise, logical steps that resembled how a computer was programmed. In practice, each of the teaching materials (called frames) required a response from the learner before the programme could proceed to the next step in the sequence (Tait, 2000).

According to Lockwood (1992), activities help students to think for themselves, apply learning, monitor their progress and check their understanding. They also help learners come up with their own views, explanation and solutions to sort out the features of an argument, to draw inferences, and to engage in controversy. Again, activities provide opportunities for learners to be exposed to competing ideas and views, experiencing those tasks that are typical of the subject, to practice important objectives, relate their own ideas and experiences to the topics in question and to reflect on the implications for their learning. In sum, activities encourage learners to study their materials actively.

Statement of the Problem

The University of Education, Winneba,(UEW) is a dual-mode institution with a vibrant Distance and e-Learning Programme which is managed by the Institute for Distance and e-Learning (IDeL). The Distance Education (DE) programme of UEW has a well-established and effectively functioning course materials, administrative and student support sub-systems. The programme employs the blended mode, which makes use of both print and electronic self-instructional modules even though the print constitutes a major component of teaching and learning.

The study materials are written by faculty members after they have undergone intensive training on writing self-instructional modules by experts in DE at IDeL to ensure uniformity in the layout and design that fosters uniform teaching strategies. In line with international standards for writing self-instructional modules, the study materials of UEW DE programme, have a number of in-text activities. As pointed out by Lockwood (1992), activities in self-instructional modules are meant to enhance active learning on behalf of students to enable them have a better understanding of what they study in the materials so that they can apply them. However, the questions that need to be asked are: Do the students do these activities? Do they derive the intended benefits from these activities? Do they have challenges working through these activities?

These foregoing questions have become necessary because, since 1996, when the programme started, there has not been any study to find out whether students do the activities and whether they derive the intended benefits from them. Again, survey of literature on DE students' use of activities in self-instructional modules has revealed a paucity of studies on this topic (Tait, 2000). Besides, the few studies identified in the literature search were very old and also were conducted outside Ghana. This is the knowledge gap the present study sought to fill.

Purpose of study

The purpose of the study was to find out the extent to which distance education students of UEW made use of activities in their self-instructional modules to enhance their understanding of the modules.

Specific objectives

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent to which UEW DE students make use of the activities when studying their modules
2. ascertain whether the students find the activities useful in studying their modules

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do the UEW DE students make use of the activities when studying their modules?
2. How useful do the UEW DE students find the activities in studying their modules?

Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant difference between Winneba and Accra Colleges of Education DE students' perceptions on the use of activities in their self-instructional modules.

Significance of the study

If learners are to respond to activities in self-instructional modules along the lines and in the time suggested by a writer, they must have some incentive or reason for doing so. Equally, if a learner decides not to respond to an activity there must be some reason for this. This study seeks to identify what the distance education students think about the activities, to enable the providers of distance education and course material writers to understand the influences of these activities upon a learner better and to improve the quality of the materials.

Literature uptake

Theoretical underpinning of activities

The inclusion of activities in self-instructional modules was influenced by three theoretical constructs. These were the concepts of **tutorial-in-print**, **reflective action guide** and **dialogue**.

Tutorial-in-print

According to Lockwood (1992), the main idea behind the concept of tutorial-in-print is asking writers to imagine they have a learner in their company for several hours and to describe the ideal form of teaching that would take place if a topic of their choice was to be taught as effectively and as efficiently as possible, to simply consider what the teacher would be doing and what the learner would be expected to do during this time. It is hoped that this would make writers produce good tutorial materials.

Rowntree (1990) regards a one-to-one tutorial as an ideal form of teaching when information, source materials, procedures, techniques, arguments, research findings, raw data, etc. would be communicated and learners would be asked to respond to a variety of questions. In some cases the actual answer would be provided, in others a commentary or feedback. In such a context a learner could be asked a whole series of questions, depending upon the nature of the topic and form the teaching was to take. The learner could be asked to recall items of information, to define concepts, draw together arguments, justify particular statements, consult other sources, interpret data, compare interpretations of the same data, work out examples, discuss things and perhaps produce something themselves. In short, teachers would expect the exercise of certain study skills by which the learner would construct their own pictures of the subject and learn to integrate what had just been taught with what had been learned before feedback was provided. Rowntree's tutorial-in-print is simply a simulation of this tutorial process, a form of teaching, in-print.

Reflective action guide

The concept of a reflective action guide is based upon several assumptions. A major one is that any activities within it merely offer advice and guidance to the learner's actions – actions in real and varied contexts, where some skill or ability is developed or refined, and where it is undertaken outside the confines of printed text and which cannot be predicted (Lockwood, 1990; Tait, 2000; Perraton, 2000).

A second feature of activities within a reflective action guide is that the learner must be involved in thinking critically; reflect upon their actions in order to guide the learning experience. It marks a major distinction between working within known parameters and setting them for oneself.

A third feature is that such activities are often demanding, time-consuming and relate to the unique situation in which the learner finds themselves. While resources, guidelines, and suggestions can be afforded and drawn upon as and when needed, it is virtually impossible to provide feedback that would relate to the outcome of the activity in question. Learners need to gather and assess the feedback themselves (Lockwood, 1990; Tait, 2000).

Dialogue

The dialogue construct is based on the argument that the more explanatory and clear the exposition, the less there was for the student to do; that some texts were as perfect as to stifle all real thinking (Lockwood, 1992). The argument continues that although many texts are attractive, accurate, readable and understandable, they are also one of the biggest deterrents to thinking in the classroom, because writers assume that students learn best by studying a polished product. The book never gives a clue that the author pondered (maybe even agonized) over hundreds of decisions. The results are that the creative process and the controversy of competing ideas are hidden from the students (Sunders, 1996).

The three theoretical constructs underpinning the inclusion of activities in self-instructional modules are informed by the constructivist learning theory which views learning as a process that brings together cognitive, emotional and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes to the learner's knowledge, skills and world view as argued by Weimer (2002). The result of this type of learning is that the learner is able to relate the information to any life situation, connect it with past learning and build their own knowledge (Rowntree, 1992).

Thus, for learning to take place, it is necessary that the learner understands and engages with the information to be learned. It is also important that the learner processes the information with higher cognitive operations such as comprehension, analysis, synthesis, application and metacognition. This promotes active learning and learner-centered teaching (Weimer, 2002).

The inclusion of activities in self-instructional modules is thus based on the argument that the overall quality of teaching and learning is improved when students have ample opportunities to clarify, question, apply, and consolidate new knowledge.

Distance education students' usage of activities in modules

There is a dearth of current studies on distance education students' use of activities in their modules. The few that are identified through literature survey are quite old.

A number of studies have reported that most distance students do not do the activities in their modules. This has principally been attributed to the study time these activities consume (Richardson, 2000, Lockwood, 1990, 1992). Lockwood (1992) for instance reports some of the comments from his research on why students are not able to complete the activities in their study modules due to time constraints. A typical example of a response in his research was:

I rarely go anywhere near the time that you are supposed to spend on [activities]...you are under too much pressure to do that.

Time management for DE students

The acquisition of time management skills, thus, is essential for the academic success of DE students because of their multiple responsibilities that compete for their limited time (Owusu-Mensah, Amoah, & Owusu, 2015).

They pointed out that factors that hindered effective time management of the DE students included improper planning, procrastination, and peer influence, lack of self-control and fear of following routines. They again found that without proper time management, students became frustrated during examinations, which invariably negatively affected their performance because most of them were adults who combined work, studies, family and community responsibilities.

Further, Chambers (1994), for example, argues that 'many distance learning courses which specify a study time have turned out on inspection to be heavily overloaded.' Chambers' finding corroborates that of Lockwood (1992), who found that in general, students spent much longer time working on exercises and practical activities than course writers predicted. The problem DE students have with regard to time management is, therefore, a complex one.

Carnahan, Gnauck, Hoffman and Sherony (2008) also lament that, poor time management skills inevitably lead to procrastination. However, Gothberg's (2006) concern is habitual lateness. People who do not plan their use of time properly usually have a difficult time being on time to appointments or turning in work at the scheduled due date. The influence is clearly seen when it affects DE students on academic performance. This has been echoed strongly by Britton and Tesser (1991), who report that students' ability to manage their time successfully and productively is explicitly related to academic performance. In support, Nash (2005) thinks that course completion rates among distance learners have time management issues as the major reason they drop or fail a course. In his study, twenty-seven percent (27%) of all student responses indicated "I tried to accomplish too much that semester," and 17% indicated "I had difficulty managing my time." "Drop" students showed a strong preference (33%) for "Tried to accomplish too much," while "Not Success" students were more likely (25%) to select "I had difficulty managing my time." Those students who failed also selected "Course assignments too difficult" in greater numbers than the group as a whole. The implication of the above findings is that improper time management among distance learners can lead to dropout, underachievement and failures.

Benefits distance education students derive from activities

On the basis of studies conducted with Open University of UK, students identified three major benefits that learners claim to derive from activities. These were Course –focused benefits, Self-focused benefits and Assignment-focused benefits (Lockwood, 1990).

Course-focused benefits, according to Lockwood (1992), are those that relate to learning from a course or topic; the concepts, ideas, arguments under discussion, the techniques, procedures or skills being practised. For learners in this category, the activities are perceived as contributing to their understanding of the material.

Self-focused benefits are those that relate to one's learning and development of a person; the opportunities they provide for ideas and arguments to be explored or reconsidered, previous assumptions challenged and personal interest awakened, developed or extended. The central feature of those comments categorized as self-focused is one of thinking critically, of questioning the materials, and challenging assumptions and previous ideas.

Assignment-focused benefits are those that contribute directly to answering a test or some other form of assignment, provide an opportunity to either think about the issues to be discussed, or provide materials to be used in it.

Methodology

The study employed the sequential explanatory mixed methods design. While the quantitative aspect was meant to reach larger sample size, the qualitative part aimed at studying the use of activities as seen through the eyes of the learner. That was to explore the world that learners perceived and how they experienced learning.

Sample size/Sampling techniques

The study focused on two study centres. With a population of 583, a sample size of 156 was selected; Winneba Centre was 86 and Accra College of Education (Attraco) Centre was 70. The sampled students were all doing basic education and in level 200. The proportional stratified sampling technique and the Krecjvic and Morgan (1970) table were used to select the sample. The level 200 hundred students were used because they had experienced the use of the models developed for usage by the students. The level hundred students had not got involved very much with the course module usage whereas the level 300 hundred students were preparing seriously towards their end of programme examination.

Instrument

Both self-developed questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was used to elicit information on students' opinion on the activity usage. The interview guide responses were used to triangulate the questionnaire responses.

The questionnaire was validated using the statistic of Cronbach alpha that yielded 0.78 and was considered appropriate (Ofori & Dampson, 2015). Respondent validation was what was used to authenticate the trustworthiness of the interview guide responses.

Mode of Analysis

Percentages and the thematic approach formed the analysis frame for the study. Verbatim quotations were used to support the qualitative aspect.

Findings and discussion

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Male	94	60.3
Female	62	39.7
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

This study focused on distance education students of the University of Education, Winneba, and as a result the majority (60.3%) of the respondents sampled constituted males, as shown in Table 1. From the table, 39.7% were females and 60.3% males. More males, therefore, got involved in the study.

Table 2: Marital status of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Single	38	24.4
Married	118	75.6
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2015)

Table 2 indicates that 75.6 % (118) of the respondents were married, while 24.4% (38) were single. This suggests that majority of the students pursuing the distance education programme at the Winneba and Attraco study centres were married.

Table 3: Ages of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
25-30	18	11.5
30-35	58	37.2
35-40	38	24.4
40-45	26	16.7
45-50	14	9.0
55-60	2	1.3
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Table 3 presents the age distribution of the distance education students. The total number of respondents was 156, out of which those aged 30-35 constituted the highest percentage (37.2%), as seen in Table 3. Those aged 35-40 representing 24.4%, while 1.3% were those aged 55-60years.

Analysis

Research question 1: **To what extent do the UEW DE students make use of the activities when studying their modules?**

The first research question sought to find out the extent to which UEW DE students do the activities in their modules. To answer this question, a number of sub-questions were asked.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they practised the activities in their course books. Results presented in Table 4 indicate that majority (83.3%, 130) did try their hands on the activities in the course while 16.7% did not. Further to that, Table 5 presents data on which of the sexes did use the activity in the course book.

Table 4: Attempts made on the activities in their course books

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	130	83.3
No	26	16.7
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Table 4 presents attempts made by the study participants with regard to the activities in their course books. The results showed that majority, 130 (83.3%) indicated they had been attempting to engage with the activities. However, 26 (16.7%) indicated they did not attempt to engage with the activities. This seems serious because the modules are to guide these DE students to understand and learn their subjects. So if this number, even though minimal did not attempt to engage with these activities, the question is, "why were they refusing to do the activities?"

Table 5: Sex and attempts on the activities in course book

		Do you do the activities in your course book?			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	80	61.5	14	53.8
	Female	50	38.5	12	46.2
Total		130	100	26	100

Data presented in Table 5 shows that for those students who have hand-on-practice with the activities in the course book, majority 80 (61.5 %) were males while 50 (38.5%) were females. It could be concluded that the males made use of the activities in the course book comparatively to the females. This finding, can be attributed to the fact that women are most of the time saddled with a lot of household responsibilities and therefore, do not have the time and concentration to go through the activities.

Table 6: Factors preventing DE students from doing the activities

	Frequency	Percent
Time factor	48	30.8
Laziness	36	23.1
No video interactive	72	46.2
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Of the 26 (16.7%) students who did not work-out the activities in the course book, 46.2% attributed their inability to the fact that there was no video interaction in the course book while 30.8% indicated that they did not have time to do so; and 23.1% attributed their inability to mere laziness. The following quotations from the interviews support these findings:

Male R: *I'm not able to do it because I do not have the time to even study the course book hence my inability to practice the activities. I'm a teacher and always have much to do after school.*

R2: *The book is voluminous and I just don't have the desire to open it unless it's been taught in class. I'll say its mere laziness to study on my own.*

These findings confirm that of Lockwood (1992) and seem to suggest that time management skills is a major challenge for DE students.

The study further analysed results on how often students practised the activities provided in the course book. Data presented in Table 7 indicates that though students practiced the activities, there was 100% agreement among them that they did not always do the activities.

Table 7: Frequency on attempts to do activities

	Frequency	Percent
Sometimes	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

The study further ascertained whether all activities, or some, in the course book were practised. Again, all of them indicated that they did practice some of the activities outlined in the course book but not all of them.

Table 8: Doing all activities in course book

	Frequency	Percent
Some of them	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

The following interview data confirm this quantitative data

R1: *I do not practice all the activities in the course book because some of them are not straight forward and also it's difficult finding the answers. The ones that are interesting and the tutors have taught us are the ones I do practice.*

R2: *Sometimes the activities are just not activity related but rather an overview and also I don't try everything because sometimes the tutors tell us areas which we should concentrate for quizzes and exams. This makes me not to try everything.*

Table 9: Preferred type of activities

	Frequency	Percent
Sharing of own views	86	55.1
Discussion	70	44.9
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Probing further respondents' responses in Table 8, data presented in Table 9 shows that majority (55.1%, 86) of students preferred activities where they could share their own views on the subject while 44.9% were of the view that activities that involved discussion were what they preferred to practise.

R1: *The activities that are open and seek for varied opinions are the ones I love practicing. This makes me think outside the box and relate to everyday life. For me, that is the essence of University Education to be able to share views personally on issues. This eliminates role learning.*

R2: *I love activities that involve the discussion because it makes me have varied opinions on the question asked. Having varied opinions broadens your understanding on the course content and you are apt for exams and quizzes.*

The findings support the idea of Lockwood's (1992) assertion on the use of activities by DE students. The findings can be explained, drawing on the principle of andragogy, which among other things, suggests that adult learners are motivated to learn when the teaching-learning situation allows them to bring in their ideas and relate what is taught to their experiences (Knowles, 1990).

Table 10: Duration for stated activities

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	28	17.9
No	128	82.1
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

To check whether students were able to complete the activities in the course book before the semester ended, the study included questions on whether students were able to do the activities within the time given. Out of the total, 82.1% (128) said 'no' while 17.9% said 'yes,' regarding whether they were able to do the activities within the given period of time.

R1: *Frankly, the duration is not enough to complete everything in the course book. Even tutors are not able to finish with us and that influences my inability to also complete everything within the course book.*

R2: *I tried to finish everything in the course book because I make time for the course work because it's my life and my desire to achieve more knowledge. I get the encouragement to do more from my tutors, who inspire the class always to stay abreast with issues with their tactful questions.*

Table 11: Inhibiting factors towards doing activities

	Frequency	Percent
Limited time	64	51.6
Pressure from school work (responsibilities)	46	37.1
Some concepts are difficult to understand	2	1.6
Too much reading becomes boring without video or clips	12	9.7
Total	124	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Students who were not able to complete the activities within the given time were further asked to provide reasons for their inability. Table 11 indicates that limited time constituted the majority (51.6%) for students' inability. 37.1% of students also cited pressure from school work (responsibilities) as their reason while 9.7% attributed it to too much reading without video clips in the course book, which made it boring for them to complete the activities. A little below 2% (1.6%) said some concepts were difficult to understand hence their inability to complete the activities.

R1: *The time duration for the programme, for me it is too limited, and hence, I'm not able to fully participate and practice everything in the course book. I learn and do more when I'm exposed to the content first but to read on my own it's difficult. I need the expert to throw light on the content.*

R2: *Combining studies and work (school) is not easy. Sometimes you pick the book and you're sleeping behind because you are tired. The edge is there but the whole being is tired and can't do anything.*

From the arguments, students' inability to do most of the activities as well as time management and how students export their experiences make students have the opportunity to express their views in various ways. Inadequate use of time, therefore, became a major hindrance to doing of the activities. This is as a result of students' inadequate time management skills.

Research question 2: How useful do the UEW DE students find the activities in studying their modules?

The second research question sought to find out whether those students who tried their hands on the activities found them useful in understanding the content. The responses are captured in both Table 12 and the direct quotes from the interview data.

Table 12: Usefulness of activities

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

In finding out whether the activities were useful for studying the course books, all sampled (156, 100%) students agreed that activities in the course books aided their studies in reading and understanding the concepts outlined in the course book.

This consensus was captured in the following extracts from the interviews:

R1: *Personally, reading is boring and I appreciate the activity related areas in the course book. The activities are very useful for studying because it relates with the topics treated and they always come after reading the content.*

R2: *Without the course activities, I know most of my friends won't be making good grades. They share with me what the activities do to them. We are compelled to read further especially when we disagree with answers provided by friends.*

R.1: *The activities in the course book help us to reflect on the topic discussed and these questions direct us to have a better understanding. Additionally makes us feel whether we have adequately understood the topic treated.*

R.2: *Even though the questions asked in the activity section, sometimes it makes it difficult to reflect outside the book. We are compelled to stick with the course content only.*

R.3: *The activity sections are just not direct, but then it makes you to think and sometimes read over the topic again to understand and for me, this is very good because sometimes we just read through without studying it and I think that is the essence of the activity, to make you rather study.*

Table 13: Suggest ways you expect the activities to be presented to facilitate effective learning

	Frequency	Percent
Concepts should be simplified for easy understanding	18	11.5
More practical scenarios with pictorial illustration	58	37.2
Video or still pictures should be encouraged to ease boredom in reading	38	24.4
Allow for more personal views	26	16.7
Possible answers (clues) should be provided to activities to direct reasoning	16	10.2
Total	156	100

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

To achieve learning with the aid of the activities in the course books, students suggested ways to facilitate use of the activities for effective learning. Table 13 indicates that 37.2% suggested some more practical scenarios with illustrative pictures should be used to enhance effective learning. 24.4% of students were of the view that to ease boredom in reading the long texts, video or still pictures should be used to encourage and keep students on their toes to learn. Allowing for more personal views was also suggested consisting 16.7% while 11.5% indicated that concepts in the course books should be simplified for easy understanding. A little above 10% suggested possible answers (clues) should be provided to direct reasoning in practicing the activities.

R1: *There's the saying that I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand. There should be more pictorial illustration and practical scenarios to engage us to do/ practice the activities in the course book. We might be adults but yet practical scenes and images will engage us more and hence improve our performance.*

R2: *There should be simplicity and precision in the activities. The complexity makes some for us not to practice it at all. But when it's been simplified, most of us will be encouraged to try.*

R3: *We can do or know we are on track if answers could be provided on the last page of the course book for reference, just to be sure that you're on course. Else you might think that is the answer but when you'll end up missing.*

Table 14: Difficulty level of the activities?

	Frequency	Percent
Easy	92	59.0
Difficult	64	41.0
Total	156	100.0

Source: Fieldwork data (2018)

Students were asked to share their views on how they will describe the activities in the course book. Data presented in Table 14 shows that 59% of students were of the view that the activities were easy to practice and understand, while 41% thought otherwise.

R1: *People will hold varied views concerning the activities in the course book, but seriously, it's straight forward and easy to understand and do. If you have really read through the topic, you will realize that the activities are just simple and easy.*

R2: *The activities are complex and it makes it hard or difficult to complete even on time. Sometimes you can spend the whole night on one or two activities when if it was simple and easy to comprehend, you can do more. The activities are not student-friendly, the tutors who write the books should factor our level and condition in mind, to come down to our level.*

R3: *The activities are useful and easy. People who might complain are the lazy ones. The difficulty level is easy. I don't see anything wrong about it. They have simplified them to our level and understanding.*

Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant difference between Winneba and Accra Colleges of Education DE students' perceptions on the use of activities in their self-instructional modules.

Table 15: Chi-Square Test analysis of the difference between Winneba and Accra centres usage of self-instructional modules

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.303 ^a	2	.001
N of Valid Cases	156		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 19.50.

From Table 15, views expressed point to the fact that there is significant difference between how DE students in the Accra and Winneba centres use the self-instructional modules for their studies. From the analysis and the results coming from it, Pearson's chi-square ($\chi^2=13.303$, $df=2$, $p<.05$) shows that the difference in views expressed by students from the two centres was statistically significant. It could be concluded that students had different views on the use of self-instructional modules.

The results could be linked to the attitude of the students which is informed by Evans and Nation's (1989a) argument where they strongly argue that students actively engaged in constructing meaning for themselves, hence in developing understanding, varied and multiple ways are used. Further as espoused by Weimer (2002) and basing the argument on the constructivist learning theory which views learning in the cognitive, emotional and environmental influences, there is the likelihood that the views expressed by the participants were influenced by the different environmental contexts and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in their learning through the use of the self-instructional modules.

Conclusions

From the findings it can be concluded that logical structuring of texts and the strategic inclusion of activities to control learning is regarded by many as an admirable goal. However, research into what learners do when they study self-instructional material suggests that control may be unattainable and that numerous factors combine to influence how an individual is likely to respond to an activity. These include time constraints, level of difficulty of concepts, the nature of the activity, and the mode of delivery. This, therefore, suggests that different learning episodes are likely to occur between the learners.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that IDeL should encourage its module writers to explain difficult concepts and also design activities that seek the views of the learners on issues.

Secondly, IDeL should include audio and video learning materials which will engage the learners and motivate them to follow the activities that accompany them.

Finally, IDeL should support its students to acquire effective time management skills.

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