

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF COURSE TUTORS' EFFECTIVENESS ON  
THE DELIVERY MODE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION.  
THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study was to examine distance education students perception of the efficiency of their course tutors and give recommendation as to how best course tutors could improve upon their mode of delivery.*

*Data was collected from 100 final year diploma students of University of Cape Coast study centre using the simple random sampling method.*

*The main instrument used to collect data was the questionnaire which was mostly constructed in the likert type.*

*Results of the study indicated that most students perceived tutors to be punctual and regular at classes. Majority of them also indicated that course tutors employed the teacher-centered approach in their teaching and were able to explain concepts very well. Furthermore, many of the students revealed that course tutors had good and cordial relationship with them.*

## INTRODUCTION

Distance education (DE) has emerged as a tool for widening access to higher education for all manner of people in the country.

Recognising the need to make tertiary education highly accessible to the Ghanaian population, the Government of Ghana proposed over a decade ago to promote DE in the country. The DE programmes in Ghana has given opportunity to mainly teachers and other public and private workers to engage in work and study. This in no doubt is contributing to manpower development of the workforce in the country.

Tertiary education in Ghana is defined in the Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana (2002:xxxvi) as the education offered after secondary level at a university, polytechnic, specialized institutions, open university and any other institutions to provide training that lead to the award of diploma and degree qualifications. Tertiary institutions provide the platform for training people in all spheres of human endeavour such as the humanities, sciences and technology, which are the driving forces of development.

In post-independence Ghana, three universities were established to offer tertiary education - the University of Ghana (UG) in 1948, followed by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (UST), 1952, and the University of Cape Coast (UCC), 1962. UG offers Liberal Arts and professional courses, including Medicine, Law, Agriculture, Engineering and Business Studies. KNUST is primarily a science and technology university. UCC was set up to prepare teachers for secondary schools, and offers its Arts and Science courses in that context. In the last two decades, two additional public universities have been

established. These are the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) 1992 and the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale 1992. In addition there are a number of Regional Polytechnics, which have been elevated to tertiary status. Since 1998 a number of private institutions, mostly denomination-based, have also been given government accreditation to offer degree-level courses.

The expansion of tertiary institutions has not been able to meet the increasing demand for tertiary education. Although, there has been significant expansion in enrolment in tertiary education, the participation rate of the age-group 18-21 years in tertiary institutions in the country is as low as 2.5% compared to 30-40% for the corresponding age group in some developed countries.

There is a general problem of access to tertiary education in the country. Access has been defined as places and facilities available for potential applicants (Ghana, 2002). Available statistics indicate that from 1996-2001, only about 32% on the average, of qualified applicants for admission into the universities, and about 54% of same for admission into the polytechnics, were actually admitted. The figures have not changed much over the period. For the 2005/2006 academic year, 55% of qualified applicants were admitted into all the public universities and 78% into the polytechnics. For the same period, statistics indicate that the male-female enrolment for both the universities and polytechnics has increased slightly meanwhile the gap is still very wide. In 2005/2006 academic year the male to female enrolment ratio was 65:35 for the universities and 70:30 for the polytechnics. This is far below the national norm of 50% males to 50% females (NCTE, (2006).

To help bridge the gender gap in education, especially at the tertiary level there have been several interventions such as an affirmative action in the public universities to lower the aggregate by one for women. This resulted in 33% enrolment of women in public universities during the 2003/4 academic year (MOWAC, 2004). Meanwhile, parity still remains an issue at the tertiary level and retention of girls from basic to the tertiary level is challenging. Most institutions do not apply the Affirmative Action Policy of recruiting more girls probably due to the limited vacancy and the increasing number of applicants. These are challenges that DE could be used to address due to the nature of its delivery.

The underlying factors that have been identified as accounting for the situation of limited access to tertiary education include the following:

- Existing tertiary institutions are unable to meet the high demand for tertiary education, which has arisen out of the rapid growth in population and the expansion in pre-tertiary education, following the introduction of the educational reforms in 1987.
- Mismatch between existing academic facilities and physical infrastructure on the one hand, and the increasing number of students admitted into tertiary institutions on the other.
- Limited opportunities and avenues for working people and those who, for one reason or the other, have had to terminate their education for a period to re-enter or acquire higher education through other modes.

- Public tertiary institutions being originally developed as residential institutions because of their national character and the model adopted.
- The existing structures and facilities in tertiary institutions providing limited and in some cases, no access for people with disabilities and special needs.

The following deficiencies also exist in the structure of tertiary education in Ghana which calls for alternative modes of delivery:

- Limited opportunities for academic and professional progression, especially for those who enter the technical/vocational streams
- Limited opportunities for those who end their education at senior secondary school level and decide to re-enter the formal system at a later point in time
- Inadequate opportunities for life-long learning

These are challenges that make DE an ultimate choice. In recognition of the challenges that limit access to tertiary education in the country, and the potential of the universities to admit more qualified students in an alternative delivery mode, the Government has recommended the promotion of DE and the establishment of open universities as one of the key measures for widening access in its current educational reform.

Ghana has a history in DE. According to Ansere (2002) the provision of DE in Ghana predates the attainment of the country's political independence in 1957. Records show that some members of the educated and political elite during the pre-independence era used what was then called Correspondence Courses to further their education and training. Notable examples were J. B. Danquah and Kwame Nkrumah. They did this because there was hardly any higher education institution in the country at the time. Aggor et al (1992) also note that as far back as March 1964, there was recognition that DE and correspondence delivery was needed to serve the needs of Ghanaians, the society in which they live and the country as a whole. University committees and senior administrators have also long realised and advocated the pivotal contribution that DE could provide for tertiary education system and societal development.

As early as the mid-1980s, the universities began to look to DE for a cost-effective solution to the problem of limited access to tertiary education. In 1986 a sub committee of the Academic Planning Committee of the University of Ghana recommended that DE be explored as at least a partial solution to the university's problems of space and staffing. From the early 1990s this option began to receive government attention (Spronk, 1999). This marked the beginning of exploring the potential of using DE to address the excessive demand for tertiary education in the country and for that matter widening access to tertiary education. Following this was continuous effort by government and development partners to establish DE programmes in all the public universities in the country, thus to turn the universities into dual mode institutions.

Since the 1990s development partners like UNESCO, and some foreign educational institutions like The Commonwealth of Learning, University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development Programme (UPCD) and Simon Fraser University have supported local interventions to help establish DE in Ghana. Notable among these efforts are the following:

- Survey on DE in Ghana initiated by the Ministry of Education and conducted by The Commonwealth of Learning in June, 1992. This study helped to identify the tertiary educational needs in the country and made several recommendations for implementation of DE.
- Ghana DE Development Project - a review of DE needs in the country, in response to request from Ministry of Education to UNESCO. The study which was conducted in June 1994 enforced the initial study and recommended systems that need to be put in place for effective implementation of DE.
- Ghana DE Development Project. The project proposal was submitted to 1994 UPCD Tier Two Competition by Simon Fraser University and won the award in September 1995 for implementation. The five-year project was for building the national level DE consortium and developing the university-level expertise and programming as recommended in the various reports on DE.
- Mid-Term Evaluation of the Ghana DE Development Project by the UPCD Tier Two project and conducted by Barbara Spronk in April 1999. This

evaluative study helped to assess the progress of implementation of DE and made recommendations for the way forward.

One wonders the extent to which these interventions have yielded results. To date only two public Universities, UCC and UEW have made remarkable impact in promoting DE at the tertiary level. The University of Education Winneba which began its DE programme in 1998 has approximately 7000 and University of Cape Coast which began in 2001 has 17,000 students. The Government of Ghana has not given up on harnessing the potential of DE to widen access to tertiary education in the country, most especially for the marginalised in education.

In its most recent educational reforms, the Government of Ghana set up a committee to review the educational policy of the country to respond to current trends of development. The report has made several recommendations for tertiary education in Ghana which include the promotion of DE. The report notes that tertiary education is key for human resource development in Ghana and recommends massive promotion of DE at the tertiary level. The Report proposes the establishment of an Open University and Open Colleges in the country.

The Open University is to provide work-study programmes through distance learning using both print and electronic delivery systems for students and workers to acquire higher education. The Open community colleges on the other hand are to provide avenues for further studies/training for those who may end their education at the JSS/SSS levels, and meet the multiplicity of needs of different learners as well as encourage life-long learning. This is endorsed in the



Government's White Paper on the report of the Education Reform Committee (Ghana 2002).

The White Paper indicates that the concept of Open University will create further opportunities for education for all. When properly established, the Open University will satisfy the need for further education opportunities for the large numbers of people who require further education. DE is no doubt emerging as the mode that meets the educational needs, interest and aspirations of the country. Obviously, DE could help tertiary institutions to achieve the national norm of 50 males to 50 females in enrolment.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was to find out the students' perception of course tutors effectiveness on the delivery mode in distance education: the case of UCC. The study was specifically to provide answer to the following research questions:

- To what extent do tutors encourage group discussion?
- Do the course tutors increase students' interest and knowledge of the subject matter?
- Do course tutors make a clear presentation during the course of their delivery?

#### METHODOLOGY

This chapter looks at the methodology that was employed to collect data for the study. It specifically looked at the research design, the population and

the sampling procedure used in the selection of the sample. The methodology finally described the instrument that was used to collect the data.

By the nature of the research, the researcher used the descriptive survey as the research design to gather information for effective analysis. The descriptive survey as a research design has the advantage of detailing highly accurate picture about the phenomenon under study. It is appropriate for this study since the study requires knowing what is at stake.

The descriptive design, however, cannot be used to manipulate or control factors that are likely to affect the validity of the research. Nevertheless, the design is the best for such a study. The descriptive statistics was used in the analyses of the data.

The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. Ten students from the respective centres were made to answer 10 questions. The questions were closed ended type questions which demanded a YES or NO response.

In the research 10 students were chosen from each region as a sample for the study. These 10 students from the respective regions were selected by the use of the simple random method.

## FINDINGS

The following tables present the responses of the students from the various regions.

Table 1

Do tutors encourage class discussion?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL %
CAPECOAST	7	70	3	30	100
ACCRA	6	60	4	40	100
TAKORADI	7	70	3	30	100
KOFORIDUA	8	80	2	20	100
KUMASI	7	70	3	30	100
HO	5	50	5	50	100
SUNYANI	6	60	4	40	100
TAMALE	8	80	2	20	100
BOLGA	7	70	3	30	100
WA	6	60	4	40	100

Table 1 represents the responses of 10 students each from each of the centres. From the table, it could be inferred that Cape Centre had seven students

choosing Yes, representing 70% of the total population of 10. We also only three students, representing 30%, choosing No. Looking at the difference between the percentages, it could be said that the students have a good perception about tutors' effectiveness in encouraging class discussion.

From table 1 again, it could be seen that all the centres have more students choosing Yes and few students choosing NO. The high values for Yes and low values for No is indicative of the fact that majority of the students agree to the fact that the tutors in the centres do encourage class discussion in the course of their delivery. However, Ho centre provides a contradiction. We have five students each for Yes and No.

This suggests a fair view of the students' perception on how tutors encourage discussion in class.

Table 2

Are the tutors styles of teaching able to raise and sustain the interest of the students?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	9	90	1	10	100
ACCRA	7	70	3	30	100
TAKORADI	8	80	2	20	100
KOFORIDUA	7	70	3	30	100
KUMASI	8	80	2	20	100
HO	8	80	2	20	100
SUNYANI	9	90	1	10	100
TAMALE	7	70	3	30	100
BOLGA	8	80	2	20	100
WA	8	80	2	20	100

Table 2 represents the responses of the students on how effective the tutors are able to raise and sustain the interest of the students in the course of their delivery. It could be inferred from the table that high numbers of students in the respective centres chose Yes. The majority of students taking Yes is suggestive of their approval of the fact that the tutors in the respective centres are able to raise and sustain the interest of the students in the course of their delivery.

Table 3

Do tutors make clear presentation in the course of their delivery?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	8	80	2	20	100
ACCRA	8	80	2	20	100
TAKORADI	9	90	1	10	100
KOFORIDUA	7	70	3	30	100
KUMASI	8	80	2	20	100
HO	7	70	3	30	100
SUNYANI	8	80	2	20	100
TAMALE	8	80	2	20	100
BOLGA	7	70	3	30	100
WA	7	70	3	30	100

Table 3 represents the students' responses on how clear the tutors make their presentation in the course of their delivery. The table presents a very good perception of the students on how clear tutors make their presentation in the course of their delivery. In all the centres, we have a majority of students from each centre choosing Yes as their response. This indicates that majority of the student agree to the fact that tutors make clear presentation in the course of their delivery.

Table 4

Do course tutors increase the students' knowledge of the subject matter?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	7	70	3	30	100
ACCRA	7	70	3	30	100
TAKORADI	8	80	2	20	100
KOFORIDUA	8	80	2	20	100
KUMASI	6	60	4	40	100
HO	8	80	2	20	100
SUNYANI	7	70	3	30	100
TAMALE	8	80	2	20	100
BOLGA	7	70	3	30	100
WA	9	90	1	10	100

Table 4 represents students' response on whether the tutors are able to increase students' knowledge of the subject matter or not. Looking from the table, it could be inferred that the high values of Yes answer the question in affirmative. Tutors increase students' knowledge of the subject matter in the course of their delivery according to the table.

Table 5

Do tutors make the course challenging and stimulating?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	8	80	2	20	100
ACCRA	8	80	2	20	100
TAKORADI	7	70	3	30	100
KOFORIDUA	8	80	2	20	100
KUMASI	7	70	3	30	100
HO	7	70	3	30	100
SUNYANI	8	80	2	20	100
TAMALE	7	70	3	30	100
BOLGA	7	70	3	30	100
WA	7	70	3	30	100

Table 5 represents the responses of students on how challenging and stimulating the course tutors make of their course in the course of their delivery. From the table, it could be seen that the affirmative response lies between eight and seven, representing 80% and 70% respectively. These statistics indicate that the majority of the students from the respective centres agree that course tutors make the course challenging and stimulating.



Table 6

Do tutors give immediate examination feedback to students?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	10	100	-	-	100
ACCRA	9	90	1	10	100
TAKORADI	9	90	1	10	100
KOFORIDUA	10	100	-	-	100
KUMASI	8	80	2	20	100
HO	10	100	-	-	100
SUNYANI	9	90	1	10	100
TAMALE	9	90	1	10	100
BOLGA	9	90	1	10	100
WA	9	90	1	10	100

Table 6 does represent the responses of students on whether tutors give immediate feedback on examination to students. From the table it could be seen that Cape Coast, Koforidua and Ho registered 100% to the positive side. Only Kumasi had eight representing 80% of the total population of 10 who answered in the affirmative. The rest of the centres had nine representing 90% of the total population choosing Yes as their response. The high values in the affirmative in all the centres indicate that majority of the students agree that tutors give immediate feedback on examination to students.

Table 7

Do course tutors prepare and explain their course materials well?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	8	80	2	20	100
ACCRA	8	80	2	20	100
TAKORADI	8	80	2	20	100
KOFORIDUA	9	90	1	10	100
KUMASI	8	80	2	20	100
HO	7	70	3	30	100
SUNYANI	9	90	1	10	100
TAMALE	8	80	2	20	100
BOLGA	8	80	2	20	100
WA	7	70	3	30	

Table 7 represents the students' response on how effective tutors prepare and explain their course material. It could be gleaned from the table that most of the centres had eight representing 80% of the total population answering in the affirmative. Only Ho and Wa had seven each representing 70% each answering in the affirmative. Sunyani registered the highest mark in the positive direction. The high values on the side of Yes indicate that the majority of the students agree that tutors prepare and explain their materials well.

Table 8

Do course tutors state and pursue their course objectives in the course of their delivery?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	6	60	4	40	100
ACCRA	5	50	5	50	100
TAKORADI	7	70	3	30	100
KOFORIDUA	6	60	4	40	100
KUMASI	4	40	6	60	100
HO	6	60	4	40	100
SUNYANI	5	50	5	50	100
TAMALE	8	80	2	20	100
BOLGA	7	70	3	30	100
WA	8	80	2	20	100

Table 8 represents the responses of students on whether tutors pursue their course objective in the course of their delivery. Looking at the table critically, it could be seen that the responses actually vary. Four students chose Yes for Kumasi representing 40%; five representing 50% each for Accra and Sunyani. Ho and Cape Coast had six each representing 60% each answering in the affirmative. Tamale and Wa had the highest number of students answering in the affirmative with eight each representing 80% respectively. Takoradi had

seven students choosing Yes representing 70%. The overall statistic indicates that not too many students agree that tutors state and pursue their course objectives. This, however, notwithstanding the high values of students who chose Yes for Tamale and Wa.

Table 9

Do course tutors facilitate the taking of notes by students?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	4	40	6	60	100
ACCRA	3	30	7	70	100
TAKORADI	4	40	6	60	100
KOFORIDUA	3	30	7	70	100
KUMASI	3	30	7	70	100
HO	2	20	8	80	100
SUNYANI	3	30	7	70	100
TAMALE	4	40	6	60	100
BOLGA	3	30	7	70	100
WA	6	60	4	40	100

Table 9 represents the students' response on whether tutors facilitate the taking of notes by students in the course of their teaching. From the table it could be seen that it is only Wa that has more than 50% of the total population

answering in the affirmative. All the rest of the centres have below 50% answering in the affirmative. This shows that majority of students are of the view that tutors do not facilitate the taking of notes by students.

Table 10

Are course tutors accessible to individual students?

CENTRES	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL
CAPECOAST	3	30	7	70	100
ACCRA	3	30	7	70	100
TAKORADI	3	30	7	70	100
KOFORIDUA	4	40	6	60	100
KUMASI	2	20	8	80	100
HO	3	30	7	70	100
SUNYANI	2	20	8	80	100
TAMALE	4	40	6	60	100
BOLGA	2	20	8	80	100
WA	3	30	7	70	100

Table 10 represents the responses of students on tutors' accessibility to individual students. From the table it could be seen that majority of the students from the respective centres answered in the negative. This statistic is suggestive

of the fact that majority of the students from the respective centres are of the view that students' accessibility to tutors is very low.

### SUMMARY, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 10 tables presented have 10 students each from the various centres who were chosen to answer either in the affirmative by ticking Yes or negative by ticking No. Ten questions in all were posed to 10 students each in the respective centres. The responses varied with respect to the centre and the question they were supposed to answer.

It was found out that while a majority of the students answered some of the questions in the affirmative with respect to some questions, other questions received very low approval from the students.

The first question was on whether tutors encourage class discussion or not. This was answered in the affirmative between the ranges of 50% and 80%. This indicated a positive view of the students on tutors' encouragement of class participation.

The second question was on whether tutors' style of teaching is able to raise and sustain the interest of students. Those who answered in the affirmative fell within the range of 70% and 90% for all the 10 centres. This range is suggestive of a positive view of students on the question.

The third question was on whether tutors make clear presentation in the course of their delivery. It was found out that the affirmative response ranged

between 70% and 90%. This shows a positive perception of the students on the issue.

The fourth question was on whether course tutors increase the students' knowledge of the subject matter in the course of their teaching. The response from all the centres ranged between 70% and 90% in the affirmative. This is a positive sign that tutors increase their knowledge (students) in the course of teaching.

The fifth question which asked whether tutors make the course a challenging and stimulating one also yielded a positive response from the students. The range was between 70% and 80%.

The sixth and the seventh questions yielded positive response from the students ranging from 90% /100% and 70%/80% respectively. The sixth question was on whether tutors give immediate examination feedback to students and the seventh question was on whether tutors prepare and explain their course materials well.

Questions nine and 10 did not receive appreciable affirmative response from the students. For question 10 the range of the affirmative response was between two and four. Question nine had only one centre having above 50%. The statistics of the responses to these questions indicate that students do not have a favourable perception about whether course tutors facilitate the taking of notes by students and whether tutors are accessible to individual students for the respective questions nine and 10.

Question eight was on whether tutors state and pursue their course objectives. The affirmative response ranged from four and eight. More than 50% of the students from the whole centres put together answered in the affirmative. This indicates a positive view of the students on the issue in question.

From the summary, it could be seen that majority of the students in the various centres have a positive perception about tutors effectiveness in the delivery of the distance education. Nevertheless, some centres should be made to sit up to arrest some of their difficulties as indicated by the responses of the students. Course tutors in all the centres must do well to facilitate the taking of notes by students. This will in effect help the students to participate in the lesson for an effective and efficient learning to take place.

Course tutors should also make themselves accessible to individual students. This will help the tutors to diagnose the strength and weaknesses of the students in order to either embark on remedial action or improve upon their teaching methodology to register a mark improvement in the process of teaching and learning.

## CONCLUSION

Distance education is a very good educational programme that has come to help make tertiary education accessible to every member in the country who qualifies without facing unnecessary barrier of distance or lack of time. Though,



the programme is beset with a lot of problems because of its young stage, the problems are not insurmountable.

The programme must therefore be supported with constant research in order to unearth any problem that may crop up for early and possible redress. Most students partaking in the programme have a favourable perception about the programme. The programme must be sustained in the right direction in order not to bring it to disrepute through the activities of the course tutors and the administrators.

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