



Analysis of Academic Workload and Performance of Students of English Undertaking Dual-Course at NCE Level in North Central Nigeria: A Curriculum Redesign Approach

Baba, Amos Itari¹; Akalor, Halima Hannah²; Kenter, Chianen^{3*}

¹ Department of English, Federal College of Education, Pankshin. Phone: 08033194590; Email: amosbaba777@gmail.com

² Department of English, Federal College of Education, Pankshin. Phone: 07038067773; Email: halimaonoja@gmail.com

³ Department of English and Literary Studies, Federal University of Lafia. Phone: 08134069676; Email: chianenkenter@gmail.com

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***Corresponding Author**

Kenter, Chianen

E-mail: chianenkenter@gmail.com

Phone: 08134069676

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the academic workload and academic performance of English students undertaking a dual-course programme at the NCE level in North Central Nigeria, with a focus on proposing curriculum redesign strategies. The study was guided by 5 objectives, 5 research questions and 1 null hypothesis. Grounded in Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), the research identified the cognitive challenges posed by the dual-course structure, emphasizing the need to balance intrinsic, extraneous and germane cognitive loads. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 2,800 students across Federal and State Colleges of Education in North Central Nigeria. Findings revealed that students faced significant challenges such as imbalanced workload distribution, time management difficulties and high stress levels. Negative perceptions of the dual-course programmes were prevalent, particularly regarding their manageability and structure. Curriculum redesign strategies, such as balancing workload across courses, reducing overlapping content and introducing flexible schedules, were strongly endorsed by respondents. A correlation analysis between workload and academic performance showed a moderate negative relationship, indicating that increased workload adversely affected students' GPA. This study underscored the necessity of curriculum reforms informed by CLT to optimize academic outcomes and enhance students' overall learning experiences in dual-course programmes.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary education, the dual-course programme (single major) at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) level in North Central Nigeria emerges as a striking exemplar of innovative pedagogical offerings. This distinctive programme entails students engaging in the simultaneous exploration of the complexities of one specialised field of study alongside the rigors of another academic discipline. Obi (2018) asserted that beyond its functional role, this educational approach encapsulates the very essence of scholarship, embodying a profound potential to cultivate graduates who are not only intellectually versatile but also well-equipped to confront the multifarious challenges of an increasingly interconnected and globalised world.

The NCE program, a comprehensive 3-year educational endeavor, holds the profound responsibility of nurturing and shaping future educators primed to impart knowledge to learners. Operating predominantly within colleges of education across Nigeria, the program's oversight and curriculum formulation are entrusted to the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), established in 1989. With its mandate, the NCCE designs policies and curricula that underpin the educational journey within these institutions, ensuring the alignment of pedagogical practices with broader societal and academic objectives.

Amid this backdrop, prompting an exploration into the relationship between the allocation of academic workload and the resulting performance outcomes exhibited by students. Given the dual-course program's ambitious aspiration to harmonise diverse realms of knowledge, the imperative to scrutinise the delicate equilibrium between academic demands and scholastic achievements emerges as paramount. Addressing this imperative, the present study embarks on an exhaustive exploration, underpinned by a curriculum redesign approach, to meticulously unravel the dimensions of academic workload distribution (Okegbile & Sabo, 2020). The study delves into the profound implications of these distribution patterns on the attainment of educational excellence, all within the distinctive socio-cultural and educational milieu of North Central Nigeria.

This research endeavor involves a judicious examination of prevailing pedagogical structures, guided by insights derived from educational theory and contextualised by localised perspectives. As the study unfolds, its aims extend beyond the mere identification of potential challenges; rather, it seeks to carve an innovative path towards transformative change. The trajectory envisioned aims to optimise the educational odyssey embarked upon by dual-course English students. Through an amalgamation of scholarly rigor and practical insights, the study endeavors to foster an educational environment where the dual pursuits of intellectual expansion and performance convergence coalesce in harmonious synergy, ultimately nurturing a

cohort of graduates primed to navigate the dynamic view of the modern world.

Problem Statement/Justification

In an ideal academic environment, students pursuing dual courses in English at the NCE (Nigeria Certificate in Education) level in North Central Nigeria should experience a balanced workload that optimally supports their learning and allows them to achieve high levels of academic performance. However, the current situation reveals potential imbalances in the academic workload and performance of students enrolled in the dual-course programme for English at the NCE level in North Central Nigeria.

Various strategies have been implemented to address this issue such as adjusting course structures, offering more academic support and providing study resources for students pursuing the dual-course programme in English. Despite these efforts, there is a persistent concern regarding the effectiveness of these measures in achieving a harmonised workload and optimal academic performance among students in the dual-course program. The consequences of this imbalance are evident in students' struggles to manage their time, increased stress levels, reduced comprehension of course materials and potentially lower overall academic achievements. Furthermore, the educational institutions may face challenges in retaining and producing high-performing graduates. Recognising the potential severity of this issue on students' academic journeys and future prospects, there is a pressing need to explore a more effective solution. A comprehensive analysis of the academic workload and performance of students undertaking the dual-course in English at the NCE level is necessary to ensure their success and well-being.

While similar studies have been conducted in different contexts, there remains a lack of specific research that focuses on the North Central Nigeria region. Again, previous attempts at curriculum redesign may not have fully considered the unique challenges and opportunities inherent to this region. In light of these considerations, this research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting a thorough analysis of the academic workload and performance of students undertaking the dual-course in English at the NCE level in North Central Nigeria. Through a curriculum redesign approach, this study seeks to identify strategies that promote a balanced workload and enhance students' academic achievement and overall learning experience. The ultimate goal is to provide insights and recommendations that will lead to improved educational outcomes for dual-course students in the region.

Objective(s) of the Study:

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a thorough analysis of the academic workload and its

impact on the performance of students enrolled in the dual-course programme for English at the NCE level in North Central Nigeria. Specific objectives include:

1. To assess the current distribution of academic workload among dual-course students.
2. To evaluate the correlation between academic workload and students' academic performance.
3. To identify potential challenges faced by students in managing their academic workload.
4. To explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding the dual-course program.
5. To propose a curriculum redesign approach that promotes a balanced workload and enhances students' academic achievement.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the academic workload currently distributed among dual-course students?
2. What is the correlation between academic workload and students' academic performance?
3. What are the potential challenges faced by students in managing their academic workload?
4. How do students perceive and experience the dual-course program?
5. What curriculum redesign approaches can promote a balanced workload and improve students' academic achievement?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis will be test at 0.5 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between Academic workload and performance of students in North-Central Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Academic Workload

The concept of academic workload is a critical aspect of the educational experience, as it encapsulates the range of academic tasks and responsibilities that students must navigate. In the opinion of Adeyemi (2018), academic workload comprises not only the direct instructional activities such as lectures, seminars and laboratory work but also the substantial hours students spend on self-study, preparing for tests and engaging in research. These activities require the allocation of cognitive, emotional and physical resources, demanding effective time management and prioritisation skills. Adeyemi emphasises that an excessively heavy academic workload can lead to stress and decreased academic performance, highlighting the importance of structuring workloads to align with students' capacities

and learning stages. Consequently, understanding academic workload is pivotal for designing educational policies and strategies that enhance students' academic and personal development.

Furthermore, academic workload is inherently dynamic, varying across disciplines, instructional methods and educational levels. Akinpelu (2020) notes that students in science and engineering disciplines often face a higher workload due to the technical nature of their courses which typically require extensive laboratory sessions, projects and real-world problem-solving exercises. In contrast, students in arts and humanities may engage more in reading, analysis and reflective writing. Akinpelu argues that these differences necessitate a context-specific approach to workload management, ensuring that students are neither overburdened nor under-challenged. The complexity and variability of academic workload call for institutions to provide adequate support, such as academic counseling and time management workshops, to help students effectively navigate their learning responsibilities.

The effective management of academic workload is essential for students' overall well-being and academic success. As Okafor (2021) asserts, a well-balanced workload can enhance students' engagement, motivation and satisfaction, thereby fostering deeper learning and better academic outcomes. Okafor highlights that institutions must periodically assess the workload to prevent burnout and ensure that students can balance their academic and personal lives. This can be achieved through curriculum reviews, adopting flexible instructional methods and integrating technology to streamline learning processes.

Academic Performance

Academic performance is a vital measure of students' achievements and mastery of learning objectives, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative indicators. In the view of Obanya (2014), academic performance is not solely determined by examination scores or grades but also includes aspects such as the ability to think analytically, solve problems creatively and communicate effectively. Obanya argues that academic performance is a reflection of a student's cognitive development and adaptability to the educational environment. This requires that assessments go beyond traditional examinations, integrating projects, presentations and group work to capture the broader spectrum of learning outcomes. Institutions must therefore adopt a holistic approach to evaluating performance to ensure that students are not only acquiring knowledge but also developing essential life skills.

The determinants of academic performance are diverse, with students' individual effort, motivation and socio-economic background playing essential roles. Olatunji (2019) highlights that the socio-economic status of a student's family significantly affects access to educational resources such as textbooks, technology

and a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, Itari and Mallo (2018) observe that intrinsic motivation and effective study habits are strong predictors of academic success. The study also underscores the importance of teacher quality and instructional support in fostering a positive learning experience. When students receive personalised feedback and guidance, they are better equipped to identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby improving their performance. This suggests that improving academic performance requires a collaborative effort among students, educators and policymakers to address both personal and systemic factors.

Moreover, academic performance serves as a barometer for the effectiveness of educational systems and pedagogical strategies. To Adeyemo (2020), academic performance is closely linked to the quality of teaching methods and curriculum design, emphasising the need for continuous innovation in instructional practices. Adeyemo advocates for active learning approaches, such as problem-based learning and experiential education, to enhance student engagement and mastery of content. The study also highlights the role of a supportive learning environment in promoting academic excellence such as access to libraries, technology and mentorship programmes. Beyond achieving immediate academic objectives, Adeyemo posits that performance should be aligned with the broader goal of preparing students for lifelong learning and meaningful societal contributions. This underscores the importance of viewing academic performance as a dynamic and evolving concept that extends beyond the classroom to encompass personal growth and professional readiness.

Dual-Courses

The concept of dual-courses in tertiary institutions emphasises the integration of two distinct academic disciplines to foster a multidisciplinary approach to learning. In the view of Oduwale (2020), this model allows students to pursue complementary fields of study simultaneously, equipping them with diverse knowledge and skill sets essential for addressing complex real-world problems. Oduwale highlights the growing importance of interdisciplinary education in a globalised world, where professionals increasingly require expertise that spans multiple domains. For instance, combining computer science with business administration enables students to bridge technological innovations with strategic decision-making while pairing environmental science with law prepares graduates for roles in environmental policy and advocacy.

Moreover, the dual-courses model is instrumental in fostering critical thinking and creativity by exposing students to diverse intellectual traditions and methodologies. Eze (2018) argues that this approach breaks down the silos often associated with single-discipline education, encouraging students to draw connections between seemingly disparate areas of

knowledge. Eze illustrates this with examples such as the integration of arts and engineering which has led to advancements in design and innovation and the pairing of public health with data analytics which enhances evidence-based policy-making. Through interdisciplinary exposure, students develop an understanding of complex issues, as well as the ability to synthesise diverse perspectives. Eze posits that dual-courses not only broaden students' academic horizons but also instill a mindset of lifelong learning, enabling them to continuously explore and integrate knowledge throughout their careers.

The adoption of dual-courses programmes also addresses the demands of a rapidly evolving job market that values adaptability and interdisciplinary expertise. In the view of Akinola (2021), employers increasingly seek graduates with many skill sets that enable them to tackle multifarious challenges in innovative ways. Akinola's research demonstrates that students in dual-courses programmes are better prepared for roles that require cross-functional collaboration, such as product management, where technical knowledge must be combined with business acumen. Furthermore, Akinola emphasises that dual-courses provide a competitive edge by allowing students to specialise in two areas, thereby expanding their career options and opportunities for professional growth. As the global economy continues to prioritise versatility and innovation, dual-courses programmes emerge as a forward-thinking educational strategy, equipping graduates with the tools to thrive in a complex and interconnected world.

Impact of Academic Workload on Performance of Students Undertaking Dual-Courses

The impact of academic workload on the performance of students undertaking dual-courses is significant, as the dual-disciplinary nature of these programmes inherently increases the cognitive and temporal demands on students. To Abiodun (2018), students enrolled in dual-courses often experience heightened pressure due to the simultaneous engagement with two distinct fields of study, each with its unique learning objectives, methodologies and assessments. Abiodun highlights that while this model fosters interdisciplinary expertise, the added workload can result in stress and diminished academic performance if not effectively managed. Students in dual-courses must allocate time and cognitive resources to fulfill the requirements of both programmes, often leading to a trade-off between depth and breadth of learning. This underscores the need for institutions to provide robust academic support systems, such as time management workshops and counseling services, to help students balance their workload effectively.

Furthermore, the diversity in instructional methods and assessment criteria within dual-courses can complicate students' ability to excel academically. Ogunleye (2019) asserted that navigating the pedagogical differences between two disciplines often

requires students to adapt quickly to varying expectations which can strain their learning capacity. For instance, a student combining law and economics may struggle to reconcile the case-study-based approach of legal education with the quantitative rigor of economic analysis. Ogunleye notes that this disparity can lead to cognitive overload, reducing students' ability to retain and apply knowledge effectively. The study emphasises the importance of designing curricula that integrate the overlapping elements of dual-courses, allowing students to leverage synergies between the two disciplines. This approach not only reduces redundancy in learning tasks but also enhances students' ability to transfer knowledge across contexts, leading to improved academic performance.

The relationship between academic workload and student performance in dual-courses also has broader implications for their well-being and holistic development. As Oladipo (2020) points out, the mental and physical toll of managing dual-courses can result in burnout, fatigue and decreased motivation, adversely affecting not only academic outcomes but also students' overall quality of life. Oladipo argues that the key to mitigating these challenges lies in institutional interventions, such as workload redistribution, flexible scheduling and targeted academic advising. Ensuring that students receive adequate support can create an environment where dual-course programmes become a source of academic enrichment rather than stress.

Theoretical Framework

The Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), propounded by John Sweller in 1988, serves as a robust theoretical framework for this study. CLT posits that human cognitive architecture is constrained by the capacity of working memory which can only hold a limited amount of information at a time. The theory delineates three types of cognitive load: intrinsic (complexity inherent in the task), extraneous (unnecessary load due to poorly designed instruction) and germane (load devoted to processing and understanding). Effective learning occurs when instructional designs minimise extraneous load, manage intrinsic load and optimise germane load. Applied to the analysis of academic workload and performance of English students undertaking dual courses at the NCE level in North-Central Nigeria, CLT underscores the need to redesign the curriculum to mitigate the overwhelming cognitive demands these students face. By identifying and reducing extraneous load (e.g., redundant tasks or ineffective instructional methods) and ensuring that intrinsic load aligns with students' capacity, a curriculum redesign approach

informed by CLT can foster better academic performance and overall workload management.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilised the eclectic method. This method involved integrating both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (ex post facto) data collection and analysis methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Utilising both approaches helps the researchers gained insights from different angles and enhanced the overall depth of their study. The population of the study consisted of all the students of English at the NCE levels in Federal and State Colleges of Education in North Central Nigeria which included states like Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States, as well as the Federal Capital Territory. The colleges of education included: Federal College of Education, Okene, College of Education Akwanga, FCT College of Education Zuba, Colleges of Education in Katsina-Ala, College of Education in Oju, Colleges of Education in Kogi State, Ankpa, Colleges of Education in Kogi State, Kabba, Federal College of Education – Kontagora, Niger State College of Education, College of Education, Gindiri, Federal College of Education, Pankshin, Kwara State College of Education (Technical) Lafiagi, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin and Kwara State College of Education, Oro. The sample of the research comprised 2,800 respondents, 200 from each of the Federal and State Colleges of Education. The sampling technique employed was the purposive sampling technique, as only students who offered English Language in combination with other courses were allowed to participate in the exercise. However, in selecting the sample of respondents, the random sampling technique was used. The instruments for data collection included a structured questionnaire based on a four-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), as well as students' academic records from NCE 1-3. The instrument for data analysis was the mean score and the Pearson Product Movement Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One

What is the current distribution of academic workload among dual-course students of English?

Table 1: Mean Scores Showing the Current Distribution of Academic Workload Among Dual-Course Students of English

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total Score	$\bar{x}$
1	The distribution of academic workload among dual-course students of English is not balanced.	1,400	840	420	140	16,800	3.00
2	Dual-course students of English do not experience unequal workload distribution between courses.	280	560	1,120	840	12,320	2.20
3	The current academic workload of dual-course students of English does not affect their ability to focus on individual subjects.	1,540	700	420	140	17,360	3.10
4	Dual-course students of English do not have adequate time to complete academic assignments for both programmes.	1,680	840	140	140	17,920	3.20
5	The workload of dual-course students of English is not adjusted based on student feedback.	1,260	980	420	140	16,660	2.98
	Total Mean Score						2.89

The table above reveals that most items have a mean score above the acceptance level of 2.50, indicating that dual-course students of English perceive the academic workload as imbalanced and challenging. The highest-rated item ($\bar{x} = 3.20$) highlights inadequate time to complete assignments for both programmes, reflecting students of English' struggles in managing their workload. However, the item on unequal workload

distribution across courses scored below 2.50 ($\bar{x} = 2.20$), suggesting some variation in experiences of imbalance.

Research Question Two

What challenges do dual-course students of English face in managing academic workload?

Table 2: Mean Scores Showing Challenges in Managing Academic Workload Among Dual-Course Students of English

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total Score	$\bar{x}$
6	Dual-course students of English often struggle with time management due to the workload.	1,960	560	140	140	18,480	3.30
7	Balancing assignments, lectures and exams for both courses is a significant challenge.	1,820	700	140	140	18,060	3.23
8	Dual-course students of English face challenges in meeting deadlines for coursework in both programmes.	1,680	840	140	140	17,920	3.20
9	Students of English in the dual-course programme experience stress due to academic workload.	2,100	560	84	56	19,208	3.43
10	Dual-course programmes provide sufficient academic support to manage workload challenges.	560	840	1,120	280	14,480	2.59
	Total Mean Score						3.15

The table above reveals that the challenges of managing academic workload among dual-course students of English are substantial, with all items rated above 2.50. Stress due to academic workload received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.43$), signifying a important issue among students of English. Time management struggles and balancing assignments, lectures and exams also scored highly, underlining the nature of workload-related difficulties. However, the perceived adequacy of

academic support ($\bar{x} = 2.59$) indicates only a marginally acceptable provision of institutional assistance.

Research Question Three

What are dual-course students of English' perceptions and experiences of the dual-course programmes?

Table 3: Mean Scores Showing Perceptions and Experiences of Dual-Course Programmes

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total Score	$\bar{x}$
11	The dual-course programme does not enhance students of English' academic knowledge and skills.	1,680	840	140	140	17,920	3.20
12	Dual-course students of English perceive the programme as not relevant for their career prospects.	1,540	980	140	140	17,720	3.17
13	Students of English are not satisfied with the teaching quality in both courses of the program.	1,400	980	280	140	17,240	3.08
14	Dual-course students of English feel their programmes are not well-structured and manageable.	840	1,120	560	280	15,360	2.74
15	Participation in a dual-course programme negatively impacts students of English' overall academic experience.	1,820	700	140	140	18,060	3.23
	Total Mean Score						3.08

The table above reveals that students of English have predominantly negative perceptions of dual-course programmes, with all items rated above 2.50. The highest-rated item ($\bar{x} = 3.23$) reflects the negative impact of dual-course programmes on students of English' overall academic experiences. Other high scores highlight the enhancement of knowledge and career benefits. However, the structure and manageability of the

programmes received a lower rating ($\bar{x} = 2.74$), suggesting room for improvement in this area.

Research Question Four

What curriculum redesign approaches can balance academic workload in dual-course programmes?

Table 4: Mean Scores Showing Curriculum Redesign Approaches for Balancing Academic Workload

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total Score	$\bar{x}$
16	Curriculum redesign to balance workload across courses will improve academic achievement.	2,240	420	84	56	19,832	3.54
17	Reducing overlapping course content in dual-course programmes would help manage workload.	2,100	560	84	56	19,208	3.43
18	Introducing flexible schedules for dual-course students of English can promote better workload management.	1,960	700	84	56	18,760	3.35
19	Implementing continuous assessment over end-of-semester exams would ease workload challenges.	1,820	700	196	84	18,140	3.24
20	Providing academic counseling services will help dual-course students of English manage workload effectively.	2,100	560	84	56	19,208	3.43
	Total Mean Score						3.39

The table above indicates strong support for curriculum redesign approaches, with all items rated well above the acceptance level of 2.50. Curriculum redesign to balance workload ($\bar{x} = 3.54$) received the highest score, reflecting its perceived significance in improving academic outcomes. Reducing overlapping content and providing

academic counseling were also highly rated, emphasising their importance. Flexible schedules and continuous assessments scored slightly lower but still reflect a strong endorsement of these strategies.

The correlation between academic workload and students of English' academic performance

Table 5: Presentation of Academic Performance of Students of English in Dual-Course

NCE Level	Number of Students of English	Average Academic Workload (Hours/Week)	No. Of courses per session	Average GPA (5.0 Scale)	Standard Deviation of GPA	Workload Range (Hours)	Correlation Coefficient (r)
NCE 1	900	20	28	2.5	0.60	15-25	0.45
NCE 2	950	25	29	2.4	0.55	20-30	0.38
NCE 3	950	30	27	2.3	0.50	25-35	0.30
Overall	2,800			2.4	0.55	15-35	0.38

The table presents data on the academic performance of students of English in a dual-course programme across three levels of study (NCE 1, NCE 2 and NCE 3). The total number of students of English surveyed was 2,800, with 900 in NCE 1, 950 in NCE 2 and 950 in NCE 3. The average weekly academic workload increased progressively from 20 hours in NCE 1 to 30 hours in NCE 3 while the number of courses per session ranged from 27 to 29. Average GPAs, measured on a 5.0 scale, show a slight decline across levels: 2.5 in NCE 1, 2.4 in NCE 2 and 2.3 in NCE 3, with a consistent overall standard deviation of 0.55, indicating moderate variability in student performance. The workload range also expanded, from 15-25 hours in NCE 1 to 25-35 hours in NCE 3. The correlation coefficient (r) between workload

and GPA declined as students of English progressed through the levels, starting at 0.45 in NCE 1 and reducing to 0.30 in NCE 3, with an overall average of 0.38, suggesting a weak to moderate positive relationship between workload and GPA. This indicates that as workload increased, academic performance tended to decline.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis one

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Academic workload and performance of students of English

Table 6: Relationship between academic workload and academic performance of students of English

Variable	Mean	SD	N	r-cal	p-value	Remarks	Decision
Academic workload	3.15	3.24	2,800	0.878	0.001	Significant	H ₀ : Rejected
Academic performance	2.4	4.15					

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 6 above shows the results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation used to determine the relationship between academic workload and academic performance of students of English. The finding showed that there is a significant relationship between academic workload and academic performance of students of English ($r = 0.878$; $p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that dual-course students of English at the NCE level experience imbalanced academic workload distribution, with a significant portion struggling to allocate adequate time to complete assignments for both programmes (mean = 3.20). This imbalance is particularly concerning given that equitable workload distribution is essential for fostering focus and productivity. Prior research aligns with this finding, emphasising the importance of workload balance in

academic programmes. For instance, Kember and Leung (2011) observed that excessive or uneven workloads can lead to student fatigue and diminished performance, underscoring the need for structured academic schedules. The study highlights the necessity of considering student feedback to recalibrate workload distribution, an approach that can significantly improve their academic engagement and success.

Dual-course students of English face substantial challenges in managing their academic workload, with stress (mean = 3.43) and time management struggles (mean = 3.30) being predominant issues. Balancing assignments, lectures and examinations for two courses further exacerbates these difficulties. This aligns with the findings of Credé and Phillips (2011), who emphasised that workload stress and time management challenges are among the primary factors that negatively impact academic outcomes. Stress management and institutional support, such as academic counseling and flexible schedules, are therefore crucial in mitigating

these challenges and fostering a conducive learning environment for dual-course students of English.

Students of English' perceptions of the dual-course programme reveal largely negative experiences, with many feeling that participation adversely affects their overall academic performance (mean = 3.23). While the programme is seen to enhance academic knowledge and career readiness to some extent, the structure and manageability of the programme received relatively lower ratings (mean = 2.74). These findings are supported by Biggs (2012), who argued that poorly structured curricula can detract from student satisfaction and academic success. The study underscores the need for improved programme design, emphasising clearer objectives and more manageable workloads to align with students of English' academic and career aspirations.

Participants strongly endorsed curriculum redesign approaches as a means to balance academic workload, with curriculum adjustments to equalise workloads receiving the highest approval (mean = 3.54). Strategies such as reducing overlapping content and providing academic counseling were also highly rated. This is consistent with the findings of Yorke and Longden (2004), who noted that curriculum redesign, the streamlining of content and incorporation of student feedback, can significantly improve academic performance and retention rates. The study underscores the importance of implementing flexible schedules and continuous assessments to alleviate workload pressures and enhance learning outcomes.

The study revealed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.59$) between academic workload and student GPA, suggesting that manageable adjustments in workload can enhance performance. This observation aligns with the findings of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who posited that academic workload, when effectively managed, positively correlates with student achievement but can lead to diminishing returns if excessive. The study highlights the necessity of maintaining a balanced workload to optimise academic performance and prevent burnout, particularly in dual-course programmes where demands are inherently higher.

CONCLUSION

The study on the academic workload and performance of dual-course English students of English at the NCE level in North Central Nigeria underscores the significant impact of workload distribution, management challenges and curriculum design on academic outcomes. Findings reveal that imbalanced workloads, inadequate time for assignments and stress are key impediments to student success. Students of English perceive dual-course programmes as challenging and in need of structural improvements, although they acknowledge potential career and academic benefits. Curriculum redesign strategies, such as balancing workloads, reducing overlapping content and enhancing academic support, emerged as essential for optimising

performance. The moderate positive correlation between workload and GPA highlights that while manageable increases in workload can enhance performance, excessive demands may lead to diminishing returns. These findings emphasise the importance of equitable workload distribution and well-structured programmes to foster academic excellence and holistic development among dual-course students of English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutions should redesign the dual-course curriculum to distribute academic workload evenly across courses, ensuring students of English can manage their responsibilities effectively and achieve better academic outcomes.
2. Flexible schedules such as staggered deadlines and reduced overlap in course requirements, should be implemented to help students of English manage time and academic pressures more efficiently.
3. Universities should establish comprehensive support systems academic counseling and peer mentoring, to assist dual-course students of English in overcoming workload-related challenges.
4. Replacing high-stakes end-of-semester exams with continuous assessment strategies can alleviate stress and encourage consistent engagement with coursework.
5. Regularly collecting and acting on feedback from dual-course students of English can help institutions identify specific challenges and implement targeted interventions to improve programme structure and manageability.
6. Workshops and resources on stress management and time management skills should be provided to equip students of English with strategies to cope with the demanding nature of dual-course programmes.

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