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Appraisal of Students' Academic Performance in Shorthand in College of Education, Warri

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**ABSTRACT**

*There are complaints of perennial poor performance of students in shorthand at both secondary schools and tertiary institutions (colleges of education, polytechnics and universities) as a result of not mastering the relevant skills taught by the teachers which has become a major issue in the recent time. This has posed a major concern to the business educators. Hence this study was embarked upon to appraise those skills which the students have not mastered. These skills are dictations and transcription, phrasing of special outlines, writing of distinctive outlines, short forms and writing and reading from printed materials. Six research questions were raised. The design of the study was quasi- experimental. An achievement test consisting of the above mentioned areas of skills was constructed and administered to 593 students of business education students of 100 level (introductory level), 200 level (intermediate level) and 300 level (higher level) of College of Education, Warri. The data were analysed using percentages. The study revealed that there was high rate of failure in dictation and transcription, followed by phrasing of special outlines, writing of special outlines, short forms and transcribing from printed materials. Recommendations were made for improving the teaching of those topics where the students have high rate of failures.*

**Keyword:** Appraisal; business education; Students' Academic Performance; Shorthand and

**INTRODUCTION**

Business Education being one of the major aspects of vocational education, impart practical oriented skills to the students so that they can be self-employed after graduation and contribute immensely to the world of work in the area of business enterprise. Business' education according to Esene, (2012) defined business education as that aspect of the total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understandings and attitude needed to perform in the business world as a producer and consumer of goods and services that business offer. Ugochukwu in Barko and Duktur (2014) stated that business education

could simply mean an educational process or context which has as its primary aim and preparation of people for roles in enterprises. In the same vein, Ezeani and Ogundola (2016) defined business education as a course that offers knowledge and competences needed for entry into business occupation of all kinds and prospering in them.

Business education students must be well prepared for future labour market in acquiring the necessary skills and dexterity to enable them perform effectively in Business Ventures. Osuala (1996) observes that Business Education is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts; office education which is a vocational

programme for office career and general business education which is also a program that provides information and competency needed for managing and using business. Ulinfun (1986) in Egbe (2008) view Business education as education for and about business or training in Business skills and competencies required for use in business offices, clerical occupations and business policy analysis.

Business Education subjects comprises of the following: (Esen, 1997), Typewriting, Shorthand, book-keeping, commerce and office practice. It is interesting to note that shorthand and Typewriting is twin subjects, which form part of the core courses of Business Education. They have the potentials of improving the vocational skills and academic performance of an average higher education Student (Adebusi, 2001). According to Oxford mini-reference dictionary (1995) shorthand is a symbolic method of writing rapidly with quick method of using symbols by implications - shorthand is a mode of writing quickly with already learnt symbols. The students, businessmen, journalists, verbatim reporters, doctors, nurses and other professionals have found shorthand relevant to the world of work. Shorthand has many versions and some dates back to 15th century. It has passed through three stages. New Era to Pitman script and Pitman 2000 presently the version mostly used is Pitman 2000.

Shorthand is a veritable tool, because it works through the medium of languages. Its educative value can be seen in the area of temperament standard of work and attitude of the mind. According to Macnicol (1972) a sound knowledge of shorthand is essential to note taking-shorthand has the ability of

moulding life, it instills discipline by being careful when writing. It builds confidence into writers. The knowledge of shorthand, no doubt, benefits vocabulary, reading, phonetics, spelling and other language skills. Pitman shorthand new course, new Era Edition defines shorthand as a way of representing every sound heard in English words with signs and symbols. The concise Oxford Dictionary of current English also defines shorthand as a "method of rapid writing for keeping pace with a speaker" in abbreviated or symbolic mode of expression. Another definition of shorthand refers to "Sound" and "sign" or symbol". Therefore, it can be said that shorthand is the method of expressing sounds by written signs.

Shorthand which is the bedrock of stenography enables a secretary to take down spoken words at high speeds and transcribe them speedily and accurately on a typewriter, has been with us for so long as to require no introduction. There are of course some who hold the view that the business education curriculum must be redesigned to reflect the progress that has come to the business world through information and communication technologies. Osuzila (1989) highlighted that the primary objectives of shorthand is to develop in the students the ability to take dictation with sufficient speed and accuracy to produce amiable transcript. For a shorthand writer to keep pace with one reader, the writer should co-ordinate the ear, mind and head while writing and this ability can be assisted only through effective training and use of adequate strategies.

The problem of poor performance of students offering shorthand has been highlighted by Kanu (1991), who observes that, many of the youths who have embarked upon the study of shorthand do not

successfully complete the course. Teachers, also have a vital role to play in the area of poor performance of students in shorthand. It is necessary therefore, to find means of assisting teachers to improve on students' performance in shorthand, this can be done through continuous teaching of the difficult topics to students for improvement purposes. It is sad to note that the students seems not to have mastered the relevant skills, which the teacher imparts. These skills are manual, aural and mental. The inability to master these skills have resulted to inability to take dictation, identify written outlines; and inability to transcribe accurately. These are the major difficulties encountered by the teachers of shorthand as a course in tertiary institutions.

Ravis and Oladunjoye (1990) noted that students are literally running away from it. Osagie (1991) concurs and adds that it is common to hear students saying that shorthand is a "difficult subject. If this is so, the situation is compounded for the Nigerian students, as shorthand is not Nigerian. There is therefore no doubt that students, learning shorthand is faced with the double problem of battle not only with English language, but also of applying this to be the writing of shorthand, this is because the English language itself is a foreign language. Despite the inclusion of computer modem office technology, the function of shorthand cannot be replaced. It is also pertinent to know that there is no other fast means of method of taking dictation and keeping pace with the speaker other than shorthand. According to Davis and Oladunjoye (1991), there has not been a change in the way information is put into the system, documents still originate from three sources

longhand, voice recorder and face to face dictation.

Students find shorthand difficult in schools, this is both tertiary and secondary as a result they don't have interest in practicing shorthand outlines this has resulted in poor academic performance of students in shorthand achievement test.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this study was to examine students' academic performance in shorthand through achievement test constructed and administered to students on selected topics in shorthand in College of Education, Warn. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to determine the ability of the students in:

1. Taking dictation and transcription in shorthand
2. Phrasing of shorthand outlines
3. Writing of special outlines
4. Writing short forms
5. Writes from printed shorthand manuals.
6. To assess the general performances of the students in shorthand examination

### ***Research Questions***

The following research questions are formulated for the study

1. What is the performance of students in taking dictation and transcription in shorthand?
2. What is the performance of students in phrasing shorthand outlines?
3. What is the performance of students in writing special outlines in shorthand?
4. What is the performance of students in writing short forms in shorthand?

5. What is the performance of students in writing and reading from shorthand printed manuals?
6. What is the general performance of the students in shorthand examination?

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quasi experimental design, which investigated the academic performance of the students in shorthand through constructed standard test. The target population of the study comprises 328 students of 100 level, 306 students of 200 level and 46 students of 300 level of NCE programme, totaling 680 students at 2005/2006 academic session. The test was constructed and administered to the entire population of the students in the three different levels used for the study, hence, there was no sampling. At the introductory level, 285 students (86.9%) took part in the achievement test, 262 (86%) participated at the intermediate level while all 46 (100%) of the students at the higher level participated in the test. The sample size was 583. In order to establish the content validity of the instrument, the test was constructed with the assistance of the lecturers in the department of Business Education. The instrument was validated by three Experts in College of Education, Warri and Delta State University, Abraka. Their suggestions were effected before the instrument was restructured with the relevant topics before it was administered to the students. A test was the instrument used for the study to collect data on student performance. The instrument has two sections. Section A contained the five questions of the

achievement test while section B required the students to indicate sex and level of study. A test comprising of the five sections with the following subtopics on dictation with transcription, phrasing of special outlines, writing of selected distinctive outlines, writing of short forms, write and transcribe from printed materials was constructed. A test was administered to the entire population of the study, which comprises 100 level, 200 level and 300 level students, the test lasted for one hour and fifteen minutes (1 hr 15 mins) each for every level of study.

There was no cases of examination malpractice and the classrooms were conducive for the exercise. The test scores obtained from each of the levels were analyzed using simple percentages. Each question carries 20 marks. Students that score 8(0.4) and above on each of the question item were recorded as passed while students score below 8(0.4) on each of the question item were recorded as failed. Students in the analysis of the general performance, scores that ranges from 0- 39% were recorded as failed, 40-49% were recorded as fair, 50-59% were recorded as average while those students that scored 60% and above were recorded as above average.

### RESULT

The test scores obtained from the achievement test are presented and analyzed in tables.

RQ1: What is the performance of the students taking dictation and transcription in shorthand?

**Table 1:** Analysis of students' performance in shorthand diction and transcription at introductory level (100 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	124	48(16.84%)	76(26.67%)
Female	161	64(22.46%)	97(34.03%)
Total	285	112(39.30%)	193(60.70%)

In the table it indicates that 112 (39.30) passed while % failed in shorthand

dictation and transcription at introductory level.

**Table 2:** Analysis of students' performance in shorthand dictation and transcription (200 level intermediate) students' performance in shorthand dictation and transcription.

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	124	53(18.60%)	71(24.91%)
Female	161	74(45.96%)	87(30.53%)
Total	285	127(44.56%)	148(55.44%)

In the table presented and analyzed, it indicates that 117 (44.66%) passed while

145 (55.34%) failed in shorthand dictation and transcription at the intermediate level.

**Table 3;** Analysis of students' performance in shorthand dictation and transcription at higher level.

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	16	8(17.39%)	8(17.39%)
Female	30	14(30.44%)	16(34.78%)
Total	46	22(47.83%)	24(52.17%)

In the table presented and analyzed, it indicates that 22 (47.83) passed while 24(52.17%) failed at the higher level.

RQ2: What is the performance of the students phrase shorthand outlines?

**Table 4;** Analysis of student academic performance in phrasing outlines at introductory level.

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	124	53(18.60%)	71(24.91%)
Female	161	74(45.96%)	87(30.53%)
Total	285	127(44.56%)	148(55.44%)

The data presented and analyzed indicates that 127 students (44.56%) passed while

148(55.44%) failed in phrasing outlines at introductory level.

**Table 5:** Analysis students’ performance in phrasing of special outlines at intermediate level (200 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	105	52(19.85%)	53(20.23%)
Female	157	73(27.85%)	84(30.06%)
Total	262	125(47.71%)	137(52.29%)

The table presented, indicates that 125 (47.71%) passed while 137 (52.209%)

failed in phrasing of shorthand outlines at the intermediate level.

**Table 6:** Analysis of students’ performance in phrasing of shorthand outlines at the higher level (300 level).

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	16	119(23.91%)	5(10.87%)
Female	30	17(36.96%)	13(28.26%)
Total	46	28 (60.87%)	18(39.13%)

The table presented clearly indicates that 28 (60.87%) passed while 18 (39.13%) failed in phrasing of shorthand outlines at the higher level.

RQ3: What is the performance of the students write distinctive shorthand outlines? Table

**Table 7:** Analysis of students’ performance in writing of distinctive outlines at the introductory level (100 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	124	68(23.86%)	56(19.65%)
Female	161	89(31.23%)	72(25.26%)
Total	285	157(55.09%)	128(44.90%)

The table presented and analyzed clearly indicates that, 157(55.09%) of the

students passed while 128 (44.90%) failed in the writing of special outlines.

**Table 8:** Analysis of students’ performance in writing of distinctive outlines at the intermediate level (200 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	105	56(21.37%)	49(18.70%)
Female	175	97(37.02%)	60(2.90%)
Total	262	153(58.40%)	109(41.60%)

The table clearly indicates that 172(65.65%) passed while 90(34.35%) failed

in writing of distinctive outlines at the intermediate level.

**Table 9:** Analysis of students' academic performance in writing of short forms at the higher level (300 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	16	13(28.26%)	3(6.52%)
Female	30	22(47.82%)	8(17.39%)
Total	46	35(76.08%)	11(23.91%)

The table presented and analyzed clearly indicates that 35(76.08%) passed while 11(23.91%) failed in writing of shorthand short forms.

RQ4: What is the performance of the students write and transcribe from shorthand printed manuals?

**Table 13:** Analysis of students' academic performance in writing and transcribing from shorthand printed manuals at the introductory level (100 level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	124	78(27.37%)	46 (16.14%)
Female	161	94(32.98%)	67 (23.51%)
Total	285	172 (60.35%)	113 (39.65%)

Total 285 172(60.35%) 113(39.65%)  
The table presented and analyzed above indicates that 172 (60.35%) passed while

113(39.65%) failed in writing and transcribing from shorthand printed manuals.

**Table 14:** Analysis of students' academic performance in writing and transcribing from shorthand printed manuals at the intermediate level (200 Level)

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	105	68(25.95%)	37(14.12%)
Female	157	102(38.93%)	55(20.99%)
Total	262	170 (64.89%)	92(35.11%)

The table presented an analyzed above clearly indicates that 170(64.89%) passed while 92(35.11%) failed in writing and

transcribing from shorthand printed materials.

**Table 15:** Analysis of students' academic performance in writing and transcribing from shorthand printed manuals at the higher level

Variable category	N	Pass	Fail
Male	16	13(28.26%)	3(16.52%)
Female	30	24(52.17%)	69(13.04%)
Total	46	37(80.43%)	19(19.56%)

The table presented and analyzed above clearly indicates that 37(80.43%) passed while 9(19.56%) failed in writing and transcribe from printed manual,

RQ5: What is the general performance of the students in shorthand test?

**Table 16:** Analysis of general performance of students in shorthand.

Variable category	Fail	Fair	Average	Above average	Total
	0-39	40-49	50-59	60	
Introductory level	44(15.4%)	78(27.37%)	109(38.25%)	54(18.95%)	285
Intermediate level	26(9.92%)	73(27.86%)	121(46.13%)	42(16.03%)	282
Higher level	3(6.52%)	8(17.39%)	26(56.52%)	9(19.56%)	46
Total	73(12.31%)	155(26.81%)	256(43.07%)	105(17.70%)	593

The data presented in the table and analyzed above indicates that at the introductory level, the following scores 44(15.44%) scored below 39% where 285 students took part in test, 78(27.37%) scored between 40-49%, 109(46.13%) scored between 50-59%, while 54 (18.95%) scored above 60% and above.

At the intermediate level (200 level), 262 students took part in the test with the following scores, 26 (9.92%) scored below 39%, 73 (27.86%) scored between 40-49%, 121(46.18%) scored between 50-59%, while 42 (16.03) scored 60% and above. The table clearly reveals that 46 students took part in the test 3(6.52%) scored below 39%, 8(17.39%) scored between 40, 49%, 26(56.52%) scored between 50-59%, while 9(19.56%) score 60% and above. The data analyzed above also indicates that total of 593 participated in the test at the level with the following general performances 73 (12.31%) scored below 39%, 155 (26.81%) scored between 40-49%, 256 (43.17%) score between 50-59%, while 105 (17.70%) scored 60% and above.

## DISCUSSION

- This study reveals that most students can take dictation but find it difficult to transcribe the shorthand outlines. The rate of failure in dictation and transcription is higher than other sections by the test. The general performance of the other four was rated in ascending of magnitude order as phrasing of shorthand outlines, writing of distinctive outlines, writing of short forms and writing and transcribing from shorthand printed manuals. The result of this study agreed with Davis and Oladunjoye (1990) who state that students are literally running away from shorthand. Osagie (1991) reveals that students have difficulties in shorthand and prefer other courses in business education. The study also reveals that the higher the level, the better the general performances of students in shorthand. The study agrees with Ugoji (1991) who opines that there is mass failure of students' shorthand examination. The study reveals that most students scored between 50 - 59% in the achievement test, the failure rate has reduced while only few students are 60% and above. The students have weak



background in English language as a result of not having the correct spellings of certain words which Ugoji (1991) had earlier highlighted.

### CONCLUSION

Shorthand is an integral part of business education, which impart relevant skills to students so that graduation and contribute immensely to world of work. There is no student, who can complete a programme without the knowledge of Shorthand, Typewriting in business education, which are the main core courses. It is imperative therefore, to state that the continuous existence of shorthand in the curriculum of business education should not be over-emphasized.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to fulfill the objective of NPE (2013) in vocational Education, the following suggestions are proffered:

1. Teachers should expose the students to daily dictations and transcriptions of shorthand exercises.
2. Teachers should constantly teach the short forms, distinctive outlines and phrasing of relevant outlines.
3. Students should practice regularly the drilling of phrases, short forms, writing of distinctive outlines, dictation and transcription. Students should constantly read from printed materials to master the relevant skills taught by the teachers.
4. Equipped shorthand laboratory should be provided with the relevant facilities: the facilities should be regularly maintained by the school authorities.

5. Students should be provided with the relevance textbooks in shorthand
6. Students should have positive attitude towards buying of relevant textbooks in shorthand.
7. More qualified teachers should be employed.

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