

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS` VIEWS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WEEKEND SCHOOL TUTORIALS

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Abstract

The present study was a descriptive survey carried out at the ZOU to establish the students` views on the effectiveness of weekend school tutorials. The study adopted the descriptive survey design which is essentially appropriate on areas where human perceptions are required. Due to its ability to solicit information deeply buried in the minds and attitudes of people, and its ability to reveal the true present state of affairs in a given set up, the design was seen to be the most appropriate one. Three instruments used in data collection were the questionnaire, interview schedule and documentary evidence to enable triangulation in order to enhance validity and reliability of data. A total of 982 students from all the four faculties of the Zimbabwe Open University, Mashonaland West Region made up the population. Out of this population, 393 made it into the sample as follows: 126(32%) from the faculty of Arts and Education, 98(25%) from Applied Social Sciences, 63(16%) from Science and Technology and 106(27%) from the Faculty of Commerce and Law. Results show that generally resources were made available for the weekend school tutorials. However, transport from regional centre to venue was a problem. Most students benefitted from tutorials through sharing ideas. However, documentary evidence shows that only a few students attended tutorials due distance to the tutorial centre which was considered a challenge. Inadequate tutor preparation also paved way to non attendance. Inadequate tutorial hours per semester per course was another of the several problems raised by the students. The study recommended that ZOU should increase in the number of weekend school tutorial hours per semester to a minimum of ten tutorial hours per course per semester. Because modules are an important type of educational media in distance education, ZOU should ensure that all course modules are available for all the courses. Programme Coordinators need to thoroughly supervise tutors thoroughly.

Key words: Open and distance learning, Effectiveness, school tutorials.