

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY ON DISTANCE LEARNING IN ENUGU STATE: A FOCUS ON THE AVAILABILITY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Carol Obiageli Ezeugbor, (Ph.D) & Nnamdi Joel Onuorah (M.Ed)

Abstract

This study investigated the implementation of the policy on distance learning in Enugu State with particular reference to the availability of instructional materials. One research question guided the study. A checklist titled observation checklist with 25 items was used for data collection. This was validated by three experts from the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability test yielded reliability coefficient of 0.71 established using inter-rater. Five (5) copies of the instrument properly filled administered through direct observation at the five National teachers Institute distance learning centers in Enugu State were used for the study. Data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage. The finding of the study showed that most of the instructional materials are available. However, the study equally revealed that chemicals, reagents for science practical as well as science kits among a few others were not available for the implementation of distance learning policy. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the management, center managers and supervisors of the centers should explore avenues to raise funds in order to procure the materials that were not available so that the implementation of the policy on distant learning could be holistic in achieving the objectives of the policy.

Keywords: Policy, Implementation, Distance learning, Availability, Instructional Materials.

Introduction

It is a statement of fact that people's right to education is considered as one of the fundamental human rights as it represents a basic human need. However, distance education is a deliberate attempt to highlight the significance of promoting the activities of adult and distance learners in all societies as well as the provision of learning opportunities for all, including those already working who may not have the opportunity for regular-face to face schooling. Attention was also drawn to the need to link literacy to social, cultural and economic development aspiration of people, improve the quality of literacy programme, teaching and enrich the literacy in developing nations. Therefore, education occupies a center stage in social and economic development of human life as it enables individuals to live and find meaning to their lives. According to Microsoft Encarta (2009) article 26 of universal declaration of human right, everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages". The constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (1999:18) as amended reiterates that its policy shall be directed towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate education opportunities for all. In this regard, teachers are indispensable in the teaching-learning process.

It is impossible to think of education without the contributions of teachers and this fact has been recognized by various international organizations such as United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) attainment in the country has further increased the demand for more qualified teachers in the nation's educational sectors. The teachers are the implementers of curriculum at the classroom setting. In order to create a strong curriculum, teachers must play an active role in providing advice on the choice of appropriate techniques, strategies, methods and instructional materials for effective implementation of any designed curriculum. The success of any teaching and learning process depends largely on the instructional materials available to the teachers.

Availability is the process of being at hand when needed. For a given instructional procedure to achieve desired objectives in distance education, it must be properly harnessed through availability and adequacy for effective instructional delivery. Distance education is a mode of delivering education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to learners who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom. It may form then tirety of a student's programme of study or it may form part of a wider programme of blended learning. It has been described as a process to create and provide access to learning when the sources of information and the learners are separated by time and distance. The Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN, 2004, section 9 (90)] attests that open/distance education should make available variety of media and technology to provide for large numbers of learners wherever they may be". These instructional materials are fundamental and therefore their availability for the implementation of distance learning education becomes imperative. Distance education is used for a wide range of purposes. Today by virtue of new technologies, fast development and constant cost fall in processing, storing and transmitting data, many private and public, non-profit and profit making institutions worldwide offer distance learning from the most basic instruction through the highest level of degree. According to Falade (2004) distance learning is a means of not only providing the necessary skills and knowledge needed to help educate those who could not gain admission into regular programme, but also those who are not willing to leave their jobs for fulltime education and training programme. The National Teachers Institute (NTI) as one of the institutions that runs distance learning education in Nigeria is located in each of the 36 states of Nigeria, including the federal capital territory and has its headquarters located at Kaduna in Kaduna State. The model of the distance education provide on the job training for serving teachers and all those interested in obtaining the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) to mention but a few. It is administered as part-time study with instructional course materials such as course books popularly known as module, cassette, tapes and other forms of visual and audio aids as stated by the federal Government on distance learning Education policy.

The success of distance learning modes of education requires the extensive availability of instructional materials. This is because the participants in distance education are adult learners. The availability of course materials for learning is supplemented with periodic face to face contact between the learners and the facilitators at the study

centers. The availability of instructional materials in distance learning becomes a necessity because of its central role among adults and distance learners. Onyeachu (2008) defined instructional materials as "ways and means of making the teaching and learning process easy, more meaningful and understandable". When instructional materials are not available, learners may not have a practical experience of what they learn. This implies that when learners are not doing well, the set objective of education cannot be realized. This is why the emphasis in curriculum implementation calls for availability of instructional material in school.

Nwoji (2002) observed that these instructional materials contribute to the teaching learning process in the following ways: holding of students attention, retention of information, stimulation of imagination and self-activity; clarification of abstract ideas; enforcement of verbal messages, showing of inaccessible process, materials, events, things and changes in time, speed and space. Instructional resources are very important because of its role in the achievement of educational objectives and goals. The extent to which an organization like educational institution attains her objectives is directly proportional to the educational resources available. Hence, Adeogun and Osifila (2008) emphasized that availability, relevance and adequacy of education resources contribute to academic achievement and that unattractive school buildings, crowded classrooms ,non-availability of human and material resources can contribute to poor academic performance of students". Yusuf in Abimbola (2001), defined instructional materials as "all form of information carriers which can be used to record, store, preserve, transmit or retrieve information for purpose of teaching and learning (Kroabergen & Ivit, 2005). Instructional materials are developed for learning and teaching, also they have important role in creating a constructivist classroom environment". However, most teachers appear to have a problem with the restriction of perceptible instructional materials in the classroom, environment (Metin & Ozmen 2009). Thus, it is important that students be actively involved in the learning process. Proper learning materials must be prepared and used for meaningful learning outcome (Balim, Inel,& Eurekli,2008). Isola, (2010) referred to instructional materials as objects or devices which help the learners to make a lesson clearer to the learners. Instructional materials are also described as audio or aural, visual or audio visual. Thus, audio instructional materials are those devices that make use of sense of hearing only, like radio and audio tape recording. Visual instructional materials on the other hand are those devices that appeal to the sense of sight only such as chalkboard, chart slide and film strip. An audio visual instructional material however, is a combination of devices which appeal to the sense of both hearing and seeing such as television, motion pictures and computer.

Despite the importance of instructional materials in achieving educational goals, one still doubts whether such facilities are very much available in various National Teachers Institute Distance Learning designated centers in Enugu State for effective teaching and learning process. It appears that the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2012) minimum instructional requirements for National Teachers Institute distance learning system such as video machine, Television sets, world globe, state of

the art libraries, computers, facilities, internet among others are hardly met by the National Teachers Institute (NTI) in Enugu State. The impact of this may be devastating given the fact that standard of learning by the student teachers is contingent on the prevailing instructional materials. This situation may possibly lead to ineffective teaching and learning process. In view of this, the contingent attached to the instructional materials implementation need to be determined.

Implementation according to Hernandez & Hodges (2003) means putting into place new policies and procedures. Implementation involves carrying out policies, programmes and practices. Implementation is the key to educational development (Alagbu 2013). Policy formulation and policy implementation strategies must be made known to the entire public as a means towards achieving the predicted outcome. Policy as a plan of action comes alive and becomes useful when and if they are planned and thereafter implemented. It is against this back drop that the Federal Government of Nigeria made it categorically clear in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) that the implementation of distance education hinges on the use of variety of media and technologies for providing and improving access to quality education for large numbers of learners wherever they may be. Therefore, the need to determine the availability of instructional materials for the implementation of distance learning programme becomes imperative. In a situation where by these instructional materials are not available for the implementation of distance learning programme, achieving the set goals may be in jeopardy. This is the reason why investigation was carried on the availability of instructional materials for the implementation of distance learning programme in Enugu State, with the view that the result could provide vital information to the academic planners in making policy on how to strengthen distance learning education for the accomplishment of stated objectives.

Statement of the Problems

Instructional materials are very necessary for the realization of the educational goals. Modern instructional facilities and equipment are not only important, but they are expected to be available in a reasonable state especially in a distance learning system. Some of the modules appear to be in short supply and inaccessible for both lecturers and students and this may account for the reason why most often the study centers are bedeviled with students roaming about aimlessly seeking for where to get them. Administrators have been querying the product of distance learning education, many of them are not performing up to expectation, they cannot defend the area of their discipline, they doubt the availability resource input into the system which may impede the learning progress of distance learning in Nigeria, especially in Enugu State. It is based on this premise that the researchers deemed it apt to determine the implementation of the policy on distance learning in Enugu State with particular reference to the availability of instructional materials.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

Are the instructional materials available for the implementation of the policy on distance in Enugu State study centers?

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design to elicit information from the respondents. The area of the study was in Enugu State. A twenty-five (25) item checklist titled "observation checklist on availability of instructional materials" (OCAIM) was the instrument used for data collection. The instrument was structured on Yes or No. Any instructional materials available was ticked yes, any instructional materials not availability was ticked 'No'. The instrument was face validated by one expert from the department of measurement and evaluation and two experts from department of educational management and policy, faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikwe University. The reliability of the instrument was determined using inter rater and the data obtained was calculated using kappa coefficient, and it yielded kappa value of 0.71, which was high enough for the instrument to be deemed reliable. The checklist was completed by the researchers through direct observation at the five study centers of Nigeria certificate in education in the National Teachers Institute distance learning in Enugu State. The data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage.

Result

Are the instructional materials available for the implementation of the policy on distance learning in Enugu State?

Table 1: Frequency and percentage scores on the availability of instructional materials for the implementation of distance learning policy.

Instructional materials	Freq	% Availability	Remark
1. Mathematic Modules	4	80%	Available
2. English Language Modules	5	100%	Available
3. Social Studies Module	5	100%	Available
4. Basic Science Module	2	40%	Not Available
5. Physical and Health Education Module	2	40%	Not Available
6. Islamic Religious Studies Modules	1	20%	Not Available
7. Christian Religious Studies modules	4	80%	Available
8. Other Nigerian Languages modules	3	60%	Available
9. General Studies (G.S.T) modules	5	100%	Available
10. Primary Education Studies modules	4	80%	Available
11. Education Studies modules	5	100%	Available
12. Chart	4	80%	Available
13. Biological specimen	2	40%	Not Available
14. Chemicals and reagent for science practical	1	20%	Not Available
15. Internet services	2	40%	Not Available
16. Audio cassettes	5	100%	Available
17. Video CD	5	100%	Available
18. Science kits	0	0%	Not Available
19. Film projector	1	20%	Not Available
20. Tape recorder	3	60%	Available
21. E- mail	3	60%	Available
22. Television	4	80%	Available
23. Picture	5	100%	Available
24. Computer	4	80%	Available
25. Telephones	5	100%	Available

The analysis in table 1 shows that 17 instructional materials (Mathematics Modules, English Language Modules, Social Studies Module, Christian Religious Studies modules, other Nigerian Languages modules, General Studies (G.S.T) modules, Primary Education Studies modules, Education Studies modules, Chart, Audio cassettes, Video CD, Tape recorder, E- mail, Television, Picture, Computer and Telephones) which is equivalent to

68% of the 25 instructional materials listed are available. On the other hand seven out of the 25 items listed were rated not available and this constitutes 32. It thus implies that most of the materials needed for the implementation of distance learning policy are available.

Discussion

The findings of the study shows that most of the instructional materials for the implementation of the policy on distance learning are available. This finding agreed with Arokwu (2003) that carried out a similar study and found out that instructional materials were available in schools. Again, the finding is in agreement with Yaya (2006) who found out that most of the tutorial support materials were available and accessible for distance learning. Akude (2004) submitted that instructional aid is a strategy developed to solve problem of learning. It seeks to teach how to plan, develop, evaluate and manage the instructional delivery process effectively, and to ensure optimal result of instruction for learners. The availability of these instructional materials in various study centres fulfils the yearning of achieving less face to face contact that is fundamental in distance learning.

Conclusion

This paper examined the availability of instructional materials for the implementation of distance learning programme in Enugu State. Five study centres of N.C.E. by National Teachers Institute distance learning in Enugu State was used for the study. The paper revealed that most of the instructional materials required for the implementation of distance learning programme are available. The reason might be that the availability of these instructional materials in various study centres is to supplement the less face to face contact that occurs in the system.

Recommendation

Based on the finding of the study, under mentioned recommendation was made.

It is important that the management, centre managers and supervisors of the institution should maintain consistency and adequacy of the availability of instructional materials in their respective study centres to consistently enhance the implementation of the policy on distance learning in Enugu State, Nigeria.

CAROL OBIAGELI EZEUGBOR (PhD)

Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Faculty of Education,
NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka.
Anambra State, Nigeria.

Co.ezeugbor@unizik.edu.ng; Carolezeugbor@gmail.com

08068374278

NNAMDI JOEL ONUORAH (M.ED)

Department of Educational Management and Policy,

Faculty of Education,

NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka.

Anambra State, Nigeria.

nnamjoel@gmail.com

07031166892

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