



Assessing the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the National Open University Teacher Education Programme in Ado-Ekiti Study Centre

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ABSTRACT

Open and distance learning system of education started as correspondence education and has grown tremendously around the world. The main purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Ado-Ekiti study centre in the implementation of the National Open University teacher education programme. This study was a descriptive survey covering the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Ado-Ekiti study centre because it is the only uni-mode institution in Nigeria operation open and distance learning. 244 students and 12 facilitators which consists of all 200 level, 300 level and 400 level students of the Faculty of Education were involved in the evaluation of the programme implementation. The researcher-designed questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Weighted mean was employed to answer the research questions raised. It was reported that majority of the respondents' perceived that course contents are in line with the objectives of the teacher education programme. Also, it was established that majority of the respondents' perceived that educational resources were not adequately utilized for implementing the teacher education programme. It was recommended amongst others that ministry of education should employ full-time facilitators to visit and assist teachers at their bases, and power supply in the country should be improved and areas not linked to the national power source should be linked.

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INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning system of education started as correspondence education and has grown tremendously around the world. Correspondence education served as a fore-runner to modern distance learning that started in response to the demands of the educationally able but neglected and under-privileged Nigerians for the provision of more access to continuing higher education. Angara (2010) opined that

open learning can eliminate all unnecessary barriers to learning while also providing students with a reasonable chance of success in an education and training system centred on their specific needs and located in multiple areas of learning. Distance education as a complementary mode of delivery was also initiated as an effort to overcome the challenges of access to education, equity, cost-effectiveness and quality for higher education (Association for



the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), 2004).

Distance education is a system of education that encourages teaching and learning actions to be performed via telecommunication and mailing services by the teachers and students being in a different environment (Tavukcu, Arap & Özcan, 2011). It is a method of teaching made available through a diverse environment and instructional units where communication and interaction between the planners and specialists of educational activities and students have been specifically equipped in conditions that conventional teaching and learning methods hinder the application of classroom activities. The link between that 'someone', 'somewhere' and the learner is therefore necessarily provided by different means of communication and instruction. Communication technologies are important instruments in distance education because they bridge the gap between the students and the teacher. Distance Education is used for in-service training of active but untrained teachers and professional upgrading of already trained teachers in schools (Ogunojemite, 2010).

Open and distance delivery of teacher education has been used for several years. The number of distance delivered teacher education programmes continues to grow and the 21st century is seen as a time of exciting possibilities for distance-delivered teacher education. Those possibilities are often linked to the use of networked computing and communications technologies. Technologies for distance learning can be classified into print, audio, video and computer. Print technologies include; textbooks, study guides, workbooks and fax. Audio technologies include; radio, telephone, voicemail, audio-conferences, audio files/CDs, podcasts. Video technologies include; videotape, satellite delivery, broadcast video, DVD. Computer technologies include; E-mail, web-based

resources, video conferences, CD-ROM, smartphones (Gambari, 2014).

The demand for higher education in Nigeria predicated the revitalization of the National Open University in Nigeria which has the mandate to: ensure equity and equality of opportunities in education but specifically in University education; provide wider access to education generally but specifically university education in Nigeria; enhance education for all and lifelong learning; ensure the entrenchment of a global culture; provide educational resources via an intensive use of ICT; provide flexible and qualitative education and reduce the cost, inconvenience and hassles of education delivery (National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), 2013). The commitment of the need for lifelong learning, as well as the huge requirement for redress for millions of adults structurally prevented from reaching their potential, creates an environment in which distance education should thrive.

Consequently, teacher professional development is a sine-qua-non at improving the capacity of teachers to effectively handle any learning situation in schools. Therefore, teacher training and professional development are considered as essential mechanisms for enhancing teachers' content knowledge and developing their teaching practices to teach to high standards (Creemers, Kyriakides & Antoniou, 2013). However, many misunderstandings exist about teacher professional development, its purpose, and how it functions (Mizell, 2010). Teacher education is aimed at addressing the problem of professional development such that trainees teaching practices would be enhanced.

The importance of teachers to the success of any system of education has been recognized in the National Policy on Education (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). In the document, it is stated that no education system can rise above the quality



of its teachers. That is to say, their profession, competence, creativity, and dedication among other qualities are central to the success of the learners in the education system. Therefore, to achieve the desired goals of education at all levels, special attention should be paid to teacher preparation. In Nigeria, the importance of effective education for teachers has been recognized, hence, it is stated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.

Teacher education is the planned programme of specialized education for producing teachers with the skill and competence of teaching in schools and colleges. The teachers who after their training are referred to as professional teachers are expected to educate the learners in a way that will make them responsible citizens in society (Olusegun, 2011). Teacher Education is the provision of professional education and socialised training within a specific period for the preparation of the individuals who intend to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens. Demand for qualified teachers has been high and will continue to be so as countries around the world work to ensure that all their citizens can access education through to high school level (upper basic) as a minimum, and beyond, a highly desirable goal (UNESCO, 2007).

The major goals of teacher education are: to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system; to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; to help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background

adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession, produce teachers in specialised areas for people with special needs; produce educators who have a good understanding of the increasing complexity of technology, and provide serving teachers and educational administrators and research workers with the technical skills to expose Nigerian students to awareness by exploring usable options in the world of works. (NOUN, 2017).

Successful program development cannot occur without evaluation (Sanders, 2000). Evaluation helps distance educators to gather information about learners and their needs and desires. It is needed because distance education is still in its formative stage and pioneering activities are still taking place within the industry. It assists distance educators in thinking about what they are trying to do and what they hope to achieve as they implement programs and activities. Evaluation can also provide the information needed by external bodies, funding agencies, businesses, colleges, students, and other clients who want to know if distance education accomplishes what it sets out to do. The literature on evaluation of teacher education programme at a distance mostly deals with comparison studies of one approach over the other, correspondence over traditional, face-to-face over distance education or of one medium over the other.

Educators have noted some major problems in assessing teachers' quality. They questioned the quality of entrance into the teaching profession through a teacher education programme, that is, the entry qualification of most pre-service teachers. The requirement into entry-level of the profession is sub-standard as the rules are not properly adhered by. In gaining admission to study any educational course, the required scores are very low compared with another profession. In Nigeria, students



with scores below 190 can apply for admission into education while the minimum for other courses is 200. Very talented students are not attracted to the teaching profession, thus, most university students selecting education major tend to be drawn from the lower part of academic ability distribution and students with academic standing are twice likely to leave the profession than their counterparts (Yusuf, 2010). Most teachers entering the teaching profession has been reported to have adequate content knowledge but need improvement in the areas of pedagogy. The ability to transmit the known content into the students lies in the pedagogical skills and the absence of these skills may mar the teaching and learning process.

These professionals may not want to leave the classroom in the quest for pedagogical skills, hence, open and distance education provides them with the opportunity of gaining the pedagogical skills at their convenience without having to leave the classroom. Therefore, despite the acknowledgement of being successful in increasing access of teachers to further education, the quality of distance teacher education remains questionable to some people. Among other aspects, the capacity of distance teacher to provide appropriate teaching practicum at a distance is a big concern of teacher educators as well as of teachers' employers (Isman, Dabaj, Altinay & Altinay, 2004).

Anne and Judith (2009) worked on opportunities and challenges of distance learning and teacher education in Botswana. Their findings revealed that enrollment of students was based on last resort, rate of completion of the program was low and the major problem of the programme was inadequate learner support from tutors. Kwasi (2009) worked on an evaluation of a distance education program at a university in Ghana and found out that teachers' preparation is effective. It was observed that

the gap between the objectives and the program's performance, as perceived by students in the program, faculty, and administrators, is not so wide that it cannot be closed and recommended a constant review of performance to close the gap.

It is observed that researchers have identified various challenges of distance teacher education in different institutions and have recommended a constant review of the program. The researcher, therefore, intends to find out if the observed challenges are prevalent in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and also to examine the standards of the programme in line with the teacher education objectives. Also, the previous studies on evaluation of teacher education programme at a distance were carried out outside Nigeria and none known to the researcher has been carried out on the only uni-mode institution in Nigeria operating the open and distance learning programme NOUN especially Ado-Ekiti Study centre. Hence, this study intends to fill the gap by examining the effectiveness of Ado-Ekiti study centre in the implementation of the National Open University teacher education programme.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Ado-Ekiti study centre in the implementation of the National Open University teacher education programme.

Specifically, the study investigated the following:

- 1) The quality of course content in achieving teacher education objectives
- 2) If educational resources are adequately utilized in the implementation of the Teacher Education programme.

Research Questions

Based on the stated purposes, the following research questions were asked;



- 1) Are the course contents in line with the objectives of teacher education programme?
- 2) Are educational resources adequately utilized for implementing the teacher education programme?

METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive survey covering National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Ado-Ekiti study centre because NOUN is the only uni-mode institution in Nigeria operation open and distance learning. 244 students and 12 facilitators which consists of all 200 level, 300 level and 400 level students of the Faculty of Education were involved in the evaluation of

the programme implementation. The questionnaire was used to elicit a response from the facilitators on teacher education objectives and educational resources used in the implementation of the teacher education program. Provus' Discrepancy Evaluation Model was adopted because it was found relevant in capturing the major issues of interest for this study. Weighted Mean was employed to answer the research questions raised.

Answering of Research Questions

Research Question 1: Are the course contents in line with the objectives of teacher education programme?

Table 3: Cumulative Mean of Course Contents in Line with the Objectives of Teacher Education Programme

S/N	Teacher Education Objectives	Mean
1.	leads to the production of highly motivated teachers	3.92
2.	leads to the production of conscientious and efficient classroom teachers	3.75
3.	encourage the spirit of enquiry in teachers	3.67
4.	encourage the spirit of creativity	3.67
5.	help teachers to fit into the social life of the community	3.42
6.	enhance teacher's commitment to national goals	3.58
7.	provides teachers with adequate intellectual and professional background	3.50
8.	Enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession	3.25
Weighted Mean Score		28.75

Table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents' perceived that course contents are in line with the objectives of teacher education programme because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 20 and their weighted mean score was 28.75

which is above the benchmark weighted mean score.

Research Question 2: Are educational resources adequately utilized for implementing the teacher education programme?

Table 2: Cumulative Mean of Educational Resources Adequately Utilized for Implementing the Teacher Education Programme

S/N	Educational Resources	Mean
1.	Television programme	2.00
2.	Radio programme	1.58
3.	Phone network	1.67
4.	Audio-tape	1.67



S/N	Educational Resources	Mean
5.	Facsimile (Fax)	1.67
6.	Internet facilities	1.83
7.	E-mail	2.42
8.	Computer programme	2.50
9.	Satellite Broadcast	2.33
10.	Textbooks	2.25
11.	Study guides	2.58
12.	Audio-conferences	1.75
13.	Videotape	2.00
14.	Broadcast video	1.92
15.	Video-conferences	2.17
16.	Voicemail	2.17
17.	E-library	2.00
18.	Facilitators	2.67
19.	Instructional Developers	2.75
20.	Technician/Electrician	2.92
21.	Counsellors	2.92
22.	Administrative staff	3.00
Weighted Mean Score		48.75

Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents' perceived educational resources were not adequately utilized for implementing the teacher education programme because the benchmark weighted mean score stood at 55 and their weighted mean score was 48.75 which is below the benchmark weighted mean score.

DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that the course contents are in line with the objectives of teacher education programme revealed that majority of the respondents' perceived that course contents are in line with the objectives of the teacher education programme. This finding aligns with that of Peter and Isaac (2014) who reported that the achievement of the objectives of a teacher education programme can be achieved with the course contents adopted by National Open University of Nigeria.

Another finding shows that educational resources were not adequately utilized for implementing the teacher

education programme. Despite the advent of the Global System of Mobile (GSM) telecommunication, the use of ICT resources for educational purposes in general and Open and Distance Learning, in particular, is still very low in Nigeria, this could be the reason for the finding of this study. This finding is in agreement with that of Peter and Isaac (2014) that reported low-extent of the adequacy of the National Open University of Nigeria educational resources utilized for implementing the teacher education programme. As indicated by Onifade (2003), and Kpolovie and Obilor (2013), funding of education in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. Yet the greatest causes of woe in the National Open University of Nigeria are the poor power supply and grossly epileptic internet connectivity.

CONCLUSION

Although students appreciate the opportunity accorded to them and the skill and knowledge they have acquired in the program, they are concerned about the



challenges they face and the length of time it takes to graduate. The challenges, which include limited learner support from facilitators, frequent turnover of facilitators, inadequate learning materials, late delivery of modules, and others are real and need to be addressed. It was recommended that;

- i. The Ministry of Education should employ full-time facilitators to visit and assist teachers at their bases;
- ii. The power supply in the country should be improved and areas not linked to the national power source should be linked. Open and Distance Learning is an illusion in any place with the type of power supply Nigeria has. The National Open University of Nigeria cannot reach its bloom with the present state of power supply that is regularly irregular; and
- iii. Internet connectivity must be improved upon if the National Open University of Nigeria is to realise its objective of access to quality education for all.

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