

Distance Education as a Tool for Human Resources Development for the Implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The study examined distance education as a tool for human resource development for junior secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria and it adopted a descriptive survey as the design. The population of the study consists of 2,410 secondary school teachers. Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 690 respondents. The instrument for data collection is a researcher self-structured questionnaire. Three experts; two from Educational Administration and one from Test and Measurement all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki were used to determine its face validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using the test re-test method where 228 teachers were used. The same instrument was administered on the same respondents after two weeks interval and was correlated using Corbach Alpha internal consistency co-efficient and it yielded 0.85 co-efficient. 690 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, but only 680 copies were returned and used for the study. Data Collected from the 680 respondents were analysed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviations to answer the three research questions. One of the findings was that Distance Education has improved quality of teachers in classroom delivery of instruction to a very high extent in Ebonyi State junior Secondary schools.

Introduction

Education is a veritable tool for the production of workforce in any developing country. Nigeria as one of the developing countries needs a sound education for producing people that will be employed to work in various sectors of her economy.

It is in this regard that she introduced the Universal Basic Education programme. The UBE programme is intended to produce skilled labour to fill the vacancies in various sectors of Nigeria's economy (Obanya, 2000). The labour forces are the human resources which includes men, women and youths. The continued development of this category of people through formal education programme could be achieved through distance education. For instance, formal educational programme such as the distance education has been used by Ebonyi State government through its Universal Basic Education Board to improve the quality of people in her workforce at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level (EBSG, 2007). The junior secondary school teachers who are currently in the teaching field have become competent in their primary assignment i.e. in teaching- learning process. This is because the UBE teachers at the junior secondary school level were exposed to distance education programme in various occasions with a view to improve them in their teaching methods, use of instructional materials and to improving their quality in teaching.

Teaching methods is an important aspect of lesson delivery for the UBE implementation in Ebonyi State J.S.S, because with good teaching methods, students can comprehend easily what was taught. Good teaching methods promote learning. It may equally sharpen students mental activities, encourage learner participation, initiative, curiosity, self- reliance and survival (Akuma, 2002).

According to Afe (1998) good teaching methods encourages active participation of the learners in the teaching- learning process, encourages active interactions between the learner and other components of the teaching- learning situation, promotes the development of skills and encourages the learners to use their own initiatives.

Equally, adequate and proper use of instructional materials is another important way of human resource development through distance education for the UBE implementation at the junior secondary school level in Ebonyi State. Instructional materials when used during classroom instruction will help in retention of what is learnt and lessen the burden of explanation. Eya (2006) hinted that instructional materials show in accessible processes, materials, events, things and change in time, speed and space which are helpful in understanding the scientific concepts. They promote greater acquisition and higher retention of factual knowledge; contribute to the

development of attitude and behaviour change and in all challenge students' creative acumen.

Again, teacher quality is imperative as way of human resource development through distance education for the UBE implementation at the junior secondary school level in Ebonyi State. Teacher quality presupposes that such teachers have intimate acquaintance with the objectives of the school system; the sort of inputs in terms of quantity, quality and type needed to ensure quality outcomes; and the kinds of processing required to transform the inputs into the expected outputs or products (Nwagwu, 1998). The quality of the teaching staff was probably the most important determinant of education standards at all levels of the system (Nwagwu, 1998). It is in this regard that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) stressed that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers". Quality teachers ensures quality content delivery, maximizes the scarce material resources for meaningful teaching and proper evaluation of himself and the students.

The implementation of the UBE programme presupposes also human resource development using the distance education as a tool. Human resource development according to Egwa (2007) is the process whereby an employee is enabled to grow on the job, through the acquisition of a wide range of experience, and increasing confidence resulting from the exercise of varied and tested responsibilities. Human resource development is also the process of increasing the potentials, knowledge, skills and capacities of people (Buseri and Paulley, 2011). It is important for any country aspiring or developing especially Nigeria for effective implementation of her educational programmes. Human resource development according to Chukwuma (2001) is the efficient allocation of resources for augmenting the productive capabilities of the individual through education and training. It is therefore, imperative that junior secondary teachers should be trained through distance education for the UBE programme implementation. From the above, human resource development is the process whereby the capabilities, knowledge and skills of people in organizations are continually up- dated through education, training and retraining.

Distance education according to Ocho (2005) is an organized course of study in which the teachers are not physically present, but teach the learners through correspondence, radio, television, computer or combination of two or more of the processes. FRN (2004) defined distance education as a mode of teaching in which students are taught using different means such as radio, television, and video tapes. Uche in Nwadam (2004) viewed distance education as a re-education provided by an educational organization at any level to cater for the learner and teachers who are physically separated, though often complemented by face-to-face teaching or tutorials. From the foregoing definitions, distance education is the process whereby learners of all categories irrespective of gender, location and status and age are made to have access to education through variety of means such as radio, television, video tapes or the combination of all. It is also a process where learners are not in face-to-face contacts with the teacher, but meet on appointed time to exchange views and their academic problems solved.

The implementation of the UBE programme presupposes human resource development using distance education as a tool. Ugomma (2000) asserted that the rationale for distance education is for expanding the supply of trained manpower.

However, the rate of decline in the academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations occasioned by poor teacher quality, poor teaching methods and improper use of instructional materials leaves much to be desired (Nwadam, 2004). Equally, one of the major arguments for the poor academic performance of students arises from the poor quality of human and physical resources that are available in school (Eduviere & Onojete, 2014).

Accordingly, as the student population swells without a corresponding increase in school facilities and quality teaching staff, the result is often over- crowded classrooms. This will undoubtedly influence the academic life in the school, and hence the achievements of students (Eduviere & Onojete, 2014). Consequently, the growth rate of students' enrollment as a result of the introduction of the UBE programme without a corresponding increase in the quality of human resources is a stumbling block to the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary schools (ESBG, 2007). Again, inadequate physical facilities, inadequate equipment, indiscipline and enormous pupil populations without corresponding teacher population is a hindrance to the implementation of the UBE programme nation wide (Maduegbunam, 2012).

Therefore, human resources development using distance education will go a long way in accomplishing the aims of the UBE programme. To this end, distance education should be enlarged in scope to perform creditably in terms of human resource development. However, the extent to which distance education has improved teacher quality, teachers teaching method and use of instructional materials has not been established. The focus of this paper therefore, is to ascertain the extent to which distance education as a tool for human resource development has improved teacher quality, teachers teaching methods and their proper use of instructional materials.

Statement of the Problem

The growing rate of decline in the academic performance of students in both internal and external examinations occasioned by poor teacher quality, poor teaching methods and improper use of instructional materials has

become a source of worry to education managers and the general public. Human resource available is of poor quality and need intensive development for improved teaching and learning to ensure the implementation of the UBE programme.

Equally, the growth rate of students' population as a result of the introduction of the UBE programme without a corresponding increase in the quality of human resources is a stumbling block to implementation of the UBE Programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools. The problem of this study is to ascertain the extent distance education as a tool has improved human resource development for the UBE programme implementation in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools. To address these problems, the following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent has distance education improved teacher quality for the UBE programme implementation in Ebonyi State Junior secondary schools?
2. To what extent has distance education improved teachers' methods of teaching for the UBE programme implementation in Ebonyi State Junior secondary schools?
3. To what extent has distance education improved teachers' use of instructional materials for the UBE programme implementation in Ebonyi State Junior secondary schools?

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey as the design. The population of the study consists of 198 junior secondary school principals and 2,212 junior secondary teachers in Ebonyi State public junior secondary schools. Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 492 teachers using balloting with replacement. The basis of stratification is on the three Education Zones in Ebonyi State-Abakaliki, Afikpo and Ouneke. Equally, all the 198 junior secondary school principals were used for the study because their number is small. Therefore, the sample size is 690 respondents. The instrument for data collection is a researcher self-structured questionnaire tagged "Distance Education for Human Resource Development Questionnaire Scale" (DEHRDQS). The instrument is made up of two parts. Part A and B. Part "A" of the instrument contains the bio-data of the respondents while part "B" contains 27 items in respect to the three research questions. Three experts, two from Educational Administration and Management and one from Test and Measurement all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki were used to determine the face validity of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was established using the test re-test method. The instrument was administered on 78 junior secondary school principals and 150 junior secondary school teachers outside the area of the study. The same instrument was administered on the same respondents after two weeks interval. Thereafter, the two tests were correlated using Corrbach Alpha internal consistency co-efficient and it yielded 0.85 co-efficient, indicating high reliability. The reliability co-efficient was higher than Ogbazi and Okpala's (1994) criterion of 0.60 acceptable for good instruments.

The instrument was a 4-point rating scale questionnaire with option of Very High Extent (VHE) High Extent (HE), Less Extent (LE) and Very Less Extent (VLE) weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. It was administered to the respondents with the help of three trained research assistants due to vastness of the area of the study. 690 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, but only 680 copies were returned and used for the study. Data Collected from the 680 respondents were analysed using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviations to answer the three research questions. Any mean score from 2.5 and above was adjudged very high extent and high extent while any mean from 2.4 and below was adjudged to be to a less extent and very less extent.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent has distance education improved teacher quality for the UBE implementation in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools?

Table 1: Mean responses of respondents on the extent distance education have improved teacher quality for the UBE implementation in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools.

S/N	Items Teachers Quality	Mean	S.D	Decision
1.	Teachers ability to master the subject matter	3.42	0.63	VHE
2.	Teachers ability to prepare lesson notes with facts on time	3.08	1.02	VHE
3.	Teachers use of probing questions during lesson delivery	3.14	0.78	VHE
4.	Sequential delivery of lesson content	3.26	0.56	VHE
5.	Ability to evaluate lesson properly	3.16	0.89	VHE
6.	Student's active participation during lesson delivery.	3.34	0.64	VHE
7.	Teacher's being confident of information they pass on to students.	3.37	0.76	VHE
8.	Use of appropriate punishment on offenders.	3.26	0.67	VHE
9.	Being friendly with all students	3.55	0.69	VHE
10.	Proper application of classroom management.	3.28	0.68	VHE
Grand Total		3.27		VHE

Key: VHE= *Very High Extent*

Table 1: Result on table 1 showed that distance education as a tool in human resource development for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary school has improved teachers quality to a very high extent. The grand mean of 3.27 buttressed this claim.

Research Question 2: To what extent has distance education improved teachers teaching methods for the UBE implementation in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary School?

Table 2: Mean responses of respondents on the extent to which distance education has improved teacher's teaching methods

S/N	Items Improvement on Teachers Methods	Mean	S.D	Decision
1.	Teachers' use of variety of teaching methods.	3.52	0.64	VHE
2.	Teachers' ability to use verbal communication during teaching.	3.23	0.66	VHE
3.	Teachers' ability to use individual method of teaching most often than others.	3.58	0.78	VHE
4.	Teachers' frequent organization of field trips when necessary.	3.54	0.79	VHE
5.	Offers teachers feedback to be utilized in planning subsequent lesson.	3.46	0.62	VHE
6.	Improved teachers' ability to use non-verbal communication during teaching.	3.62	0.95	VHE
7.	Improved teachers' ability to cover the syllabus on time.	3.13	0.71	VHE
8.	Improved teachers' use variety of evaluation methods.	3.22	0.82	VHE
9.	Good teaching methods encourage learners' initiatives.	3.78	0.86	VHE
10.	Good teaching method promotes the development of skills of the learner.	3.77	0.76	VHE
11.	It also encourages curiosity of the learners.	3.88	0.94	VHE
Grand Total		3.52		VHE

Table 2: Result on table 2, indicated also that distance education as tool for human resource development for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior secondary schools has improved teachers methods of teaching to a very high extent during class teaching. The grand mean of 3.52 is evidence.

Research Question 3: To what extent has Distance Education improved teacher's use of instructional materials for the UBE implementation in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary schools?

Table 3: Mean responses of respondents on the extent to which distance education has improved teachers use of instructional materials for the implement of the Universal Basic Education in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools.

S/N	Items Teachers use of Instruction materials	Mean	S.D	Decision
1.	Student's retention of what was learnt has been improved by teacher's proper use of instructional materials.	3.57	0.92	VHE
2.	Use of instructional material properly lessened teachers' explanation of concepts.	3.28	0.73	VHE
3.	It helped challenge students' creative acumen.	4.01	0.02	VHE
4.	The uses of instructional materials properly by teachers help students to take active part during teaching- learning process.	3.71	0.82	VHE
5.	Has helped to appeal to the various senses of the students' delivery.	3.36	0.91	VHE
6.	Has helped to make clear the complexities of concepts.	3.21	0.87	VHE
	Grand Mean	3.52		VHE
	Grand Total			

Result analyzed on table 3, showed that Distance Education as a tool in human resource development has improved teachers use of instructional materials to a very extent for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools. This is authenticated with a grand mean of 3.52.

Discussion

Result on table 1, showed that distance education is an important tool for human resource development for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools. The grand mean of 3.27 authenticated the above statement. This is because Distance Education has improved teachers quality in lesson delivery to a very high extent. Teachers' quality in terms of their ability to master the subject matter, ability to ask probing questions and sequential delivery of lesson shows that distance education has improved teachers' quality. This will help learners improve too and perform better in their academic work. This is in line with Ugomma (2000) who said that the rationale for distance education is for expanding the supply of trained manpower that will help improve the dwindling academic performance of learners.

Result on table 2, showed that distance education as a tool for human resource development for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools has improved teachers' methods of classroom teaching to a very high extent with a grand mean of 3.52. Teachers use of variety of teaching methods, improved teachers' ability to cover the syllabus on time and improved use of evaluation methods have all helped to improve students academic performance. This collaborates Chukwuma's (2001) view that a good teaching method offers feedback to be utilized in planning subsequent lesson and makes proper use of teaching materials in order to present clear illustration of different aspects of the lesson.

Result on table 3, indicated that Distance Education as a tool has equally improved teachers use of instructional materials to a very high extent for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools with a grand mean of 3.52. The use of instructional materials during teaching-learning process is an important strategy for improving students' academic performance in internal and external examinations. That was why authors and education managers decry the non-utilization of instructional materials during classroom teaching. Instructional materials when utilized properly during teaching will increase students' retentive memory, reduce teachers' explanation of concepts, and promote the rate of change in behaviour and attitude during lessons. This collaborate the view of Eya (2006) who pointed out that instructional materials show inaccessible process, materials, events, things and change in time, speed and space which are helpful in understanding the scientific concepts. It is therefore, pertinent that distance education be taken seriously by government by enlarging its scope to continue to play its role as an alternative strategy for human resource development for the achievement of the aims of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State junior secondary schools.

Conclusion

The study examined Distance Education as a tool in human resource development for the implementation of the UBE programme in Ebonyi State Junior Secondary schools. It critically tried to find out the extent to which Distance Education has improved teachers' quality of teaching, their ability to use variety of teaching method and their ability to use instructional materials appropriately for the UBE implementation.

The improvability of teachers in these areas showed that Distance Education is an important tool for human resource development for the attainment of the UBE programme objectives.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Government should intensify effort in providing for the procurement of instructional materials for distance education programme.
2. Government should provide such instructional materials that cannot be provided by teachers and principals.
3. Government should motivate course tutors of Distance education programme to put in so as they will improve more on their methods of teaching.
4. Non- governmental organizations should be involved in helping to boost the standard of Distance Education by helping government to provide instructional materials.
5. Officials of the state Universal Basic Education Board and the Ministry of Education should create more Distance Education Centers in the State for human resource development of teachers.

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