



Counselling and Management Strategies for Effective Implementation and Delivery of Open / Distance Education

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ABSTRACT

Open and distance education programmes have come to stay in the education horizon in Nigeria. The success of the programme depends on the input of educational managers. Thus, this study examines the management strategies for the effective implementation and delivery of open and distance education programme in Nigeria. Among the strategies discussed are planning, staffing, production and preparation of course materials, monitoring and supporting staff effective staff relations, quality assurance, networking, providing learners support facilities and so on. Other aspect of open and distant education such as objectives, justification, challenges and prospects were also highlight in the work The following are some of the recommendations made at the end of the study: educational managers should devise strategies that will enhance effective implementation of open/distance education programmes and managers should be innovative in order to enhance effective implementation of open/distance education programmes.

Keywords: Open, Distance, Education, Counselling, Management, Strategies, Open Education and Distance Learning, Programme, Horizon and Success.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most elusive concepts to pin down to any generally acceptable definition by educationists. The reason is that so many factors such as the learner, the teacher and the rate of societal development, which have made people to view education in different perspectives, affect its definition. This has generated a lot of controversies in defining education. Education can be defined in various ways. Agina-Obu (2005) view education as the aggregate or totality of all processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society in which he/she lives. This definition indicates that education should be of positive value to the society as the learners are expected to become useful members of the society.

Education is also defined as the social process by which people are subjected to the influence of a selected and controlled environment (especially of the school) so that they may attach social competence and optimum individual development. This definition portrays education as a social process in which learners will achieve social competence as well as maximum individual development. It also made reference to the school environment in which it takes place as controlled and selected one. The use of the word especially indicates that although the school is the main agent of education, education is not confined to it alone.

According to R.S. Peters there are three criteria by which in which education can be identified with are: (a) education implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed it (b) education must involve knowledge and understanding and some sort of cognitive perspective, which is not inert (c) education at least rules out some procedures of transmission on grounds that they lack willingness (awareness of what is happening) and voluntariness on the part of the learner. From this perspective, it can be observed that education has to do with transmission, that is passing on or imparting

knowledge that is worthwhile. It also makes the learners to be aware of what is happening and seeking their co-operation, without forcing them to learn.

These definitions have some relationship with the origin of the word education. Education originated from two Latin words *educere* and *educare*. *Educere* means to draw out or lead out while *educare* means to nourish, to bring up or to raise. Education is the leading or drawing out of an individual's innate powers and potentialities which will enable him/her to understand, acquire relevant acceptable skills and other competencies necessary for himself/herself and the society he/she belongs. Education, therefore, is the process of awakening the innate but latent potentialities of an individual and nourishing and sustaining them for personal social competencies.

In line with this definition is the one given in African education by Norfield Foundation which says 'let us boldly attempt to formulate the aims of education. Perhaps the key may be found in what any good father could wish to his son. That he would grow to the full status of man sound in mind and body, that according to his ability he should acquire the knowledge and the skill that will enable him to live a life useful to his fellows and enjoyable to himself, that he should have high standard of conduct, honourable and trusted by his fellows; that he should be able and willing to take his rightful part in the affairs of his country and people; that he should be a man of courage and sound judgement not too easily deflected by the emotions of the moment, that he should be a man of peace within himself, rightly discerning his duty to himself, his fellows and his God.

This definition of education includes an all-round development involving mental as well as physical, emotional and spiritual developments. Indeed, it is this kind of total development that the society expects the school to offer the individual in order to make him grow up and become useful both to himself and to the society.

Distance and Open Education

Open and distance education is one of the forms of formal and sometimes informal education that has come to stay in the education system. Like education, there is no one definition of open and distance education. Rather, there are many approaches to defining the term. Most definitions, however, pay attention to the following characteristics:

- a) Separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place.
- b) Institutional accreditation; that is, learning is accredited or certified by some institution or agency. This type of learning is distinct from learning through one's own effort without the official recognition of a learning institution.
- c) Use of mixed-media courseware, including print, radio and television broadcasts, video and audio cassettes, computer-based learning and telecommunications. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use.
- d) Two-way communication allows learners and tutors to interact as distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous.
- e) Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner interaction, library study, and laboratory or practice sessions.
- f) Use of industrialized processes; that is, in large-scale open and distance learning operations, labour is divided and tasks are assigned to various staff who work together in course development teams.

However, attempts can be made to define open and distance education. Wali (2013) explained that open and distance education has been variously conceptualized. Federal Ministry of Education (2002) defines Open Education as "any form of learning in which the provider enables individual learners to exercise choice over any one or more of a number of aspects of learning and distance education as an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and or time from the learning.

Distance Education could be regarded as a special kind of adult education (Ibekwe, 2003). It includes all those teaching methods, the interaction as well as the pre-based self instructional materials (Holmberg,

2014). Distance education is a response to a growing demand to democratize and liberalize education which cannot be achieved by the traditional method centred around the classroom (Ozigi, 2013). Similarly Ayitayo (2015) view distance education as an instrumental environment in which technology is used to bridge the instrumental gap caused by geographical separation between teacher and learners. Put differently, Jegede (2003) defines open learning as the flexibility of and access to instruction by the distance mode in order to ensure that broad availability of educational opportunities reach as many segments of the population as possible while distance learning is the provision of education by a mode other than the conventional face to face method, whose goals are similar to, and just as noble and practical as those on campus full time face to face education. UNESCO (2015) also has similar view when it regards Distance Education as study at all levels in which students are not given frequent face-to-face teaching or supervision by their tutors or facilitators.

Achuonye (2004) explained that Distance Education (DE) as well as Open Education involves self-paced learning process wherein the learner can frame his/her disposal. To be specific, Distance and Open Education at its most basic level takes place when a teacher and learners are separated by physical distance and media material (Viz voice, video, data and print) is used to bridge the communication gap. Therefore, distance and open education is characterized by the following:

- a) The quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length and breadth of the learning process as against the traditional face-to-face interactions.
- b) The quasi-permanent absence of the class group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not as a class.
- c) The use of media viz print, audio, video, computer etc. to line the teacher and learner and carry the course content.
- d) The influence of an educational institution both in planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of students' support services.
- e) The provision of two-way communication so that student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue.

Keegan (2014) view distance education as a quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner through length and breadth of the learning through the use of technical media (e.g. print, audio, video and the computers etc) to unite the teacher and the learners and carry the course contents. It refers to all types of study where students are not in regular physical contact with their teachers. Perraton (2013) explained that distance education as an educational process in which someone conducts a significant proportion of the teaching removed in space and/or time from the learner. Distance education has broadened access to all levels of education for those who are already on the job that need to further their education in order to be more efficient on the job. The National Policy on Education (2013) emphasizes the need for equal access and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. Distance education is delivered through the use of various learning resources and supported by teachers using a variety of modem means of communication. It provides a two-way communication which allows the learners and teachers to interact.

Open education on the other hand implies freedom from formal restrictions and rigidity of the conventional system. There is openness with regard to admission, teaching media, space and time, course contents and even course objectives. Thus, open education is any form of learning in which the provider allows the learner to exercise choice over a number of aspects of learning (Adegun & Balogun, 2013). In open education, the learner takes responsibility (i.e. chooses) and this includes: what to learn, how to learn, where to learn, how quickly to learn, who to turn to for help and whether when and where to have e learning accessed. All over the country, distance and open education has become popular because it has made it possible for a large number of people in many states, who might have been denied opportunity for formal education to have access to quality education in spite of constraints of time, location etc. Those who are unable to attend full time or be present at a particular place and time can access education in their chosen time and place. Thus distance education tends to lead to open education.

Put together, the National Policy on Education (2013) explained that open and distance education is the mode of teaching in which learners are removed in time and space from their teachers. These definitions

signify that open and distance education is often used to address a whole range of related forms of teaching and learning with emphasis placed on openness concerning access, organization, methods and flexibility in delivery and communication patterns as well as the use of various technologies to support the learning.

Objectives of Open and Distance Education

The National Policy on Education (2013) provides the goals of open and distance education as:

- a) Provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied.
- b) Meet special needs of employees by mounting special certificate course for their employees at their work place.
- c) Encourage internalization especially of tertiary education curricula.
- d) Ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing Nigerian experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work.

However, Achuonye (2004) identified the following objectives of open and distance education as follows:

- a) Widening of access to education to ensure equity and the equality of opportunities.
- b) The development of education as an instrument for poverty alleviation especially in rural areas or communities.
- c) The enhancement of opportunities that support education for all (EFA) and life-long learning.
- d) The entrenchment in the Nigerian populace in the emerging global culture of technological literacy.
- e) Provision of infrastructure for the dissemination of educational resources via an Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- f) Provision of avenues for the acquisition of flexible and qualitative education for all categories of learners which will be accessible anywhere, anytime and via an appropriate and a cost effective medium.
- g) A reduction in the cost of education delivery.

Justification for Open and Distance Education in Nigeria

Achuonye (2004) explained that the adoption and development of open and distance education delivery system in Nigeria is justifiable on the following grounds;

- a) Provision of education for All (EFA) and promotion of life-long learning
- b) Filling the gap created by the closure of outreach/satellite campuses
- c) It is cost effective
- d) It ensures improved economic scale
- e) It encourages flexibility of delivery system
- f) It enhances maximum utilization of academic personnel
- g) It is useful as tool for poverty eradication, vocational and lifelong education
- h) It is useful in the provision of National Orientation and non-formal education
- i) It helped in reaching the unreached
- j) It ensures on the job training

Features of Open and Distance Education

Bates (2011) identified the following characteristics of open and distance education:

1. Open and distance education often tend to be “open” programmes, concerned with improving access and with democratizing education, as contrasted with maintaining education as a privilege of the elite.
2. Open and distance education drop or lower the academic entrance requirements that conventional programmes typically require if they are also open programmes
3. Open and distance education have the same exit or graduation requirements as conventional programmes even though, because of their openness, they may accept learners with fewer formal

qualifications, which creates a situation that places even greater demands on those providing tuition and learner support.

4. Open and distance tend to deliver their courses using a mix of technologies and media; they almost always include some print materials, but these are supported by a variety of electronic media, including radio, television, audio and video cassettes, computers and telecommunications.
5. Open and distance education are typically supported by part-time tutors and counsellors who may be employed by conventional institutions.
6. Open and distance education frequently require collaboration with other programmes and agencies to provide learning materials, course development and delivery personnel, facilities or all of these.
7. Open and distance education tend to need larger administrative bodies that accommodate a greater diversity of functions.
8. Open and distance education must remain open, flexible and innovative in response to learner needs, a challenge that is best met by open, flexible and innovative approaches to management.

Koul (2005) listed the features of open and distance education;

- a) In open and distance education, learning take place at the individual's place and pace.
- b) Open and distance education involves a two-way didactic communication
- c) Open and distance education requires the use of electronic media, radio, television, audio-video materials, telephones and computers.
- d) Open and distance education uses self-learning materials
- e) Open and distance education necessitates the use of multi-media materials and or components.

Wali (2007) explained that open and distance education is characterized by physical separation between learners and teachers and the instruction is delivered through a variety of media multimedia, print and other ICT's (video, telephone, radio, television add audio cassettes etc). The system is also cost effective system of instruction, independent of time, location, pace and space which can be used for a variety of learning situations either for primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education.

Counselling and Management Strategies for Effective Implementation and Delivery of Open and Distance Education

Management experts in the field of education are concerned with strategies for effective implementation and delivery of open and distance education. Managers of open and distance education adopts different strategies in order to ensure effective implementation and delivery of the programmes.

Planning

Managers of open and distance education programmes carry out pre-planning activities ro constant environmental survey. Moore and Kearsley (2014) explained that open and distance education may be a new programme from within an academic unit or collaboratively from an idea or need identified from an outside agency, such as a government department. The programme must then be subjected to scrutiny in comparison with the institution's overall mission, its assessment of its resources according to its strategic plan, and a needs assessment study, taking into account the outside environment into which it will be lunched. Only if it still seems feasible in the light of these considerations should the programme go ahead. The pre-planning is an important exercise undertaken to ensure that open and distance education programme does not go underground even after it commences. Jam (2011) noted that the pre-planning stage is the most important stage in the effective implementation and delivery of open and distance education. Tooth (2014) enunciated that this strategy require diligence, knowledge of the environment and prospects of the open and distance education programme in that environment to avoid dissipating energy unnecessarily.

Managers of open and distance education ensure that the programme is learners centred. This indicates that there is a primary prerequisite of openness. The manager of open and distance education programme must acknowledge the learner as the focus of the educational process and the active participant in the interactive process and not a passive listener. Nwizu (2012) explained one of the methods adopted by the

managers of open and distance education programme is to ensure that education should encourage independent and critical thinking by offering the learners choices, possibilities, and contesting view points within the process, that education should develop problem-solving skills, self-confidence and competencies in his interaction with society. This is because the essential aim of education is the development of the whole person, especially the continuing capacity to make sense of oneself and the world in which one lives. Lauriland (2013) rightly pointed out that learning must be situated in the sense that the learner is located in the situation and what is known is in relation to particular context. In other words, knowledge has a contextual or a localized character. This means that knowledge cannot be separated from the situation in which it is to be used.

Managers of open and distance education programme also ensure that learning should continue throughout life (from birth to death) and should be of direct relevance to the needs and experiences of the learner. So life-long learning is not restricted to the kind of learning that takes place in school. Rather it is a comprehensive education including the traditional schooling, vocational and experiential learning for self-development, self actualization and self-fulfillment. Thus, learning is affected by a whole spectrum of influences, ranging from the organized or systematic learning of the conventional institutions, to those of the unsystematic and unorganized settings. As such, life-long learning is related to the whole range of influences are encountered in the course of living. Awotua-Efebo (2013) explained that the inclination to learn from life itself and to make the condition of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling. Hence, people learn a great deal from experiences or materials not specifically designed or designated for learning and training (e.g. watching, hearing or reading an advertisement) as it is in attending a lecture or working through a training course.

Managers of open and distance education ensures that there is planning and development of the curriculum. Abdulahi (2014) explained that two steps is taken at the planning and development stage. The first step is a detailed preparation of the curriculum and strategy for the programme, which involves a good deal of consultation, between the academic unit and the service departments such as media, printing and learner support to explore the technical possibilities and the implications of the curriculum intentions. Harris (2013) observed that this step will result in the following:

- a) A detailed curriculum for the programme
- b) A media print and tutorial delivery plan

All these information will be put together into a development blueprint which will culminate in the development of the curriculum. When all these tasks have been accomplished, it is necessary for senior management to make a final review.

Production and Preparation of Course Materials

Perry (2010) explained that production and preparation of course materials is an important task carried out by the managers of open and distance education programme. Course materials need to be reproduced to meet the latest estimate of enrolments, both print and audio-visual. If audiovisuals are to be broadcast, they must be produced in their final form and broadcast schedules must be publicized. Heinich, Molenda and Russell (2014) noted that parallel with the reproduction process, the distribution logistics need to be finalized and full tutorial and learner support services put in place. Fagerlind and Saha (2012) explained that the effective distribution of the course materials will determine the success of the open and distance education programmes.

Staffing

Another activity engaged in by managers of open and distance education programmes is the staffing mix required to implement an open and distance learning programme depends on the educational job to be done and the organizational model that has been chosen. Personnel in open and distance education programmes will likely fall into the following categories: educational staff, materials production staff and administrative staff. The educational staff will include the following:

- Subject specialists
- Specialists in materials production
- Specialists on tutoring and counselling

- Tutors, especially part-time tutors
- Broad casting producers
- Research workers and evaluators

Materials production staff includes:

- Printers
- Copy editors
- Graphic designers
- Broadcasting technicians
- Typists and word processing clerks
- Desktop publishing specialists

Administrative staff include:

- Personnel staff
- Financial staff
- Record clerks
- Secretaries and typists
- Warehousing and dispatch staff
- Messengers, drivers and janitors

Dhanarajan (2015) observed that apart from the fact that qualified staff are recruited, managers of open and distance education programmes ensured that arrangements will be made for the training and retraining of staff. Evans and Nation (2014) explained that the training and retraining of staff may be done through the following:

- On the job
- Short courses at the institution
- By sending learners on full-time or part-time courses
- By enrolling them in an appropriate course taught at a distance

Monitoring and Supporting Staff

Perry (2010) explained that the management of open and distance education programmes will always involve monitoring and supporting staff who are at a distance from central office. These staff may include regional centre staff tutors and learning materials producers such as writers of print materials and scripts for media production. It has become somewhat of a truism in open and distance education programmes that learners in open and distance education programmes need continuing contact with the programme and support from programme personnel as they undertake and work through their studies. Staff at a distance needs the same kind of support and contact, especially since they are frequently working under the conditions such as the following:

- They tend to be part-time, with major affiliation and commitment to some other institution.
- They tend to be on short-term or annual contracts
- They likely have no regular face-to-face contact with supervisors and colleagues
- Their roles are frequently diffuse and ill-defined.

Effective Staff Relations

In addition to the training of the staff Harris (2013) explained that managers of open and distance education programmes practise effective staff relations, by means of:

- Clear role descriptions, expectations and reporting lines
- A thorough induction into the programme, its history, goals, policies and procedures
- Continual updating on changes in policies and procedures
- Frequent and effective two-way communication
- Opportunities for face-to-face meetings
- Frequent performance monitoring and review
- Accurate and efficient records systems
- Opportunities for input into decisions that affect their work

Networking

Managers of open and distance education programmes engage in aggressive networking. Gatwa (2011) explained networking as creating, expanding and maintaining relationships with other agencies. Harries (2013) explained that networking or collaboration among educational institutions, agencies and programmes is becoming increasingly the order of the day both in industrialized and less affluent countries for a number of reasons:

- a) Public funding for education at all levels is decreasing and governments are requiring institutions to work with each other and in many cases with industry in order to qualify for funding.
- b) Institutions and agencies are responding to decreasing levels of funding by seeking collaborative arrangements that can make scarce resources go further.

Moran and Mugridge (2013) noted that open and distance education programmes are among the foremost seekers and implementers of collaborative arrangements, because of the nature of their work and for various other reasons:

- a) Learning materials development represents a major cost to distance programmes. Producers of such materials can share costs through co-development arrangements or recoup costs by sales and leases of materials. How resource programmes can save on staffing and other recurrent costs by purchasing materials rather than developing their own.
- b) Learners are seeking flexibility, especially the ability to apply credits taken in one programme to the completion of requirements for another, credit transfer arrangements place great demands on institutional collaborative arrangements.
- c) The technologies used in delivering distance programmes are forcing collaboration, partly because delivery agencies need to share costs and partly because of the nature of the technologies themselves which increasingly make distinctions between “distance” and “conventional” programmes irrelevant and meaningless.

Paul (2012) gave the following advance to open and distance education programme managers who are involved in collaboration

- a) Ensure that clear benefits from the collaboration are established and understood by all partners.
- b) Remain open to re-negotiation if necessary
- c) Keep the number of partners involved to the fewest possible to make the collaborative venture successful.
- d) Delegate clear authority and responsibility to specific partners and individuals
- e) Take seriously the need to understand differences in corporate cultures.
- f) Scrutinize the collaborative venture on a regular basis and disband if it is no longer meeting its objectives.
- g) Ensure that agreements have the full support of the executive officers of all the partner institutions.

Quality Assurance

Barikor (2013) explained, that quality assurance is another activities of managers of open and distance education programme in order to ensure effective implementation and delivery of the programme. Paul (2012) noted that quality assurance is an approach to organizing work that ensures that;

- a) The institution’s mission and aims are clear and known to all
- b) The systems through which work will be done are well thought out, foolproof and communicated to everyone.
- c) It is clear to everyone who is responsible for what
- d) What the institution regards as “quality” is well defined and documented
- e) Systems are in place to check that everything is working to plan
- f) When things go wrong and they will, there are agreed ways of putting them right.

Gatwa (2011) identified the following essential features of quality assurance:

- a) It is a method of checking upon how well the system is being adhered to.
- b) It is a method of correcting mistakes
- c) It is a method of changing the system if it has become out of date

Provide Learners Support Facilities

Managers of open and distance education programme provides learner support facilities. Barikor (2013) explained that this ensures that managers provides relevant adequate and continuing support like counselling information and advance throughout the learning period to learners through face-to-face contact and other media like the computer, telephone, post and the radio. In which case, every teaching strategy should be assessed against the extent to which it supports learners.

Managers of open and distance education ensures expectations of success for the learners. Barikor (2013) explained that open and distance education programme is not only concerned about opening access alone but also about providing people with a fair chance of success. This includes offering learners the opportunities to complete their programmes successfully with qualifications that are valuable in the market place. One way of meeting this objective is by consulting both the employers and worker in their curriculum development.

Evaluation: Evaluation is one of the major strategies used by the management to ensure successful delivery of the open and distant education programme.

Challenges of Open and Distance Education

Open and Distance education like all other human endeavours, has a number of problems or costs attached and prospect or benefits as well. Despite all that can be said in favour of Open and Distance Education, not every student can succeed in it because it is not an easy method of learning as a result of the following problems:

- a) Developing interest and motivation which come through social stimulation and interaction with the teacher and other learners are usually difficult to come by.
- b) Learning readiness is usually hard to attain as usually witnessed by the non- start of under-achievers and the dropout rate in these types of programmes.
- c) Difficulty in grasping the structure of the subject matter at a distance with the absence of peer group, clarification or pressure. Others are:
- d) Learning abstract facts in analytic and instructive thinking;
- e) The absence of immediate feedback, no benchmarks on progress or failure for evaluating progress in learning on the spot.
- f) The issue of loneliness and inferiority complex.
- g) Its dependence on non-human communication media and capital intensive structures, characterize the distance system with high initial costs, besides the risks to theft and occasional power failures.
- h) To Hobart (1995) distance: education programmes “are costly to develop, and require considerable skills in both their development, application and administration”.
- i) Distance education is adjudged to facilitate less impactful learning dividend than in the conventional two-way- teacher-student interaction.
- j) Finally, learning may be more subjected to abuse in Distance Education than iii the face- to-face models, especially in areas requiring supervision and personal efforts in assignment.

Prospects of Open and Distance Education

While Harry, John and Keegan (1993) observed that besides the lack of communication which has been a DE characteristic problem, “complexity of relationship” is by far more complex in DE than in traditional education. Similarly, in terms of “evaluation of open and distance learning” Thorpe (1990) observed that the tutor groups can be quite small and the extent to which the tutors are “deviating from the mean” is usually hard to identify.

The net effects of these problems to Thorpe and Grugeon (1987) often result in high rate of withdrawals and non-completion of courses in the programmes, especially at the early stages of distance courses.

These are some of the common problems that may be facing the learners in this discipline. However, it is quite evident that the prospects of distance education far outweigh its problems.

Some Prospects of Open and Distance Education

Distance education, like independent study has the following in-built characteristic advantages in the present realities:

- a) It can be operated anywhere that there are students, even if there is only one student; whether there are teachers at the same place and at that time or not;
- b) It places greater responsibility for learning on the learner rather than the teacher, as learning takes place largely through the student's activities;
- c) It frees faculty members from custodial duties so that more time can be devoted for more and affective academic work;
- d) It involves the use of outside experts who otherwise may be unavailable in some critical areas of need. Such offers the possibility of getting expert knowledge, using the most appropriate teaching media and methods of proven effectiveness at little or no extra costs to the user or learner.
- e) It offers learners more opportunities in courses, formats and methodologies to choose from;
- f) It has the tendency to mix and combine media and methods so that each subject can be taught and learnt in the best possible way;
- g) The tendency to redesign and develop courses to fit into an ever changing technology is self-evident;
- h) Distance Education preserves and enhances opportunities for adaptation to individual needs and differences;
- i) Learning is individualized. The evaluation of students achievement is kept simple without barriers as to place, the rate at and method by as well as the sequence within which the student studies;
- j) It enables the students to start, stop and learn at their own time, rate and pace, thus making the learner autonomous
- k) It provides continuing professional development for graduates in small countries like Mauritius, where the number of students are too small to justify the launching of a face to face programme.
- l) It expands the limited number of spaces, places and programmes available in our conventional higher educational system.
- m) Learning is made convenient for the student in the comfort of his own environment because the learner and teacher are separated;
- n) Its openness improves access to education by all. It is indeed an important means of extending formal and non-formal education to people who otherwise would not have had the chance of getting them like nomads, women, workers, the handicapped, the lonely and even prisoners.
- o) It is an effective way to overcome obstacles in situations where there are shortage of higher educational institutions, lack of qualified teachers and inadequate facilities in the existing institutions, etc. as often experienced in poorer nations like Nigeria where still less than 10 percent of her qualified citizens have access to higher education.
- p) The characteristics (or circumstances) of the learners (e.g. ability to pay) do not often determine the character, content, availability and the quality of distance education programmes, when once it has been delivered (Robinson, 1970).
- q) It provides ample opportunities for continuing professional development for professionals and lifelong learning for all.
- r) Grading or assessment in DE is far more objective than in the face-to-face which is often bedeviled by various unethical and subjective factors, like favouritism, sorting, etc.
- s) Its use of both print and non-print media enhances the flexibility of taking into account the increasing use of new information and communication technologies drawn from a wide range of institutional settings (Shabani & Okebukola, 2001).

- t) It provides low unit cost in training when compared with the formal system, in the absence of classroom and hostel accommodation including transportation, medical and feeding bills charged to the learner.

Nwizu (2001:25) summarized the values of distance education as follows:

1. The provision of equal opportunity for education
2. Liberalization or democratization of education
3. Meeting of the high demand for higher education by individuals
4. Achievement of education for all.
5. Increasing access to education
6. Increasing the supply for needed manpower
7. Providing opportunity for work- study
8. It is cost effective in the face of limited resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following:

1. Educational managers should devise strategies that will enhance effective implementation of open/distance education programmes.
2. Managers should be innovative in order to enhance effective implementation of open/distance education programmes.
3. Aggressive collaboration with other institutions should be encouraged to enhance effective implementation of open/distance education programmes.
4. There should be effective monitoring to ensure that various categories of staff are efficient in discharging their duties.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that Nigeria will greatly seek to explore and perfect the distance and open learning alternatives, in preparation to cope with her developmental strides. However, the success of this programme lies squarely on the ability of the managers of the programme to do the needful.

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