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Content

Institutional Policy Factors and Learners' Academic Achievement in Two Open Distance Learning Institutions in Nigeria

Muibi, T. G. PhD,

Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper examined the influence of institutional policy factors on learners' academic achievement in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Ibadan. The institutional policy factors used for the study were learner supports services, course material development, information communication technology, staff capacity development, quality assurance and feedback method while learners' academic achievement was measured based on cumulative grade performance average records. The population comprised distance learners of 200 to 500 cohorts in the institution with sample size: NOUN -1,120 and DLC – 636. The instrument used for data collection was an Adapted Course Experience Questionnaire Scales developed by graduate careers Australia 2009 of Learner Support Services (r=0.86), Course Material Development (r=0.84), Information Communication Technology(r=0.83), Staff Capacity Development (r=0.80), Quality Assurance(r=0.78), Feedback Method(r=0.75). Data obtained were analysed through descriptive statistics and Multiple regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the Institutional policies significantly influenced students' academic achievement ($F_{(6,1388)}$ =499.75; R^2 =0.68), and jointly accounted for 68.2% of its variance. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the management and staff of distance learning institutions should ensure effective implementation of these policies in order to assist and improve learners' academic achievement. This paper, therefore, concluded that it is pertinent to note that the institutional policy factors implemented by the two institutions to a large extent played significant role in learners' academic achievement.

Keywords: Distance learning institutions, Institutional policy factors, Academic achievement.

Background to the study

Distance education or open and distance learning (the universally recognized terminology) is now widely accepted as a "powerful force contributing to social and economic development" (UNESCO 2014). This educational delivery mode is fast becoming an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream of educational systems in both developed and developing countries, with particular emphasis for the later (Moore and Tait, 2002). This growth has been stimulated in part by the interest among educators and trainers in the use of new, internet-based and multimedia technologies, and also by the recognition that traditional ways of organizing education need to be reinforced by innovative methods, if the fundamental right of all people is to be realized (Resta, Rumble & Zaparovanny, 2002).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions are facing great pressure to maintain their quality of education delivery and students' academic achievement for student satisfaction and retention in the programme (Sembiring,2015), and formulate measures to cater for diverse student needs (Li et al., 2015). This paper reports a study on institutional policy factors in ODL, focusing on the case of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Ibadan. – the institutions featuring the provision of flexible education modes with both full-time face-to-face (F2F) and part-time ODL study programmes. The two institutions put in place the institutional policy factors on learner supports services, course material development, information communication technology, staff capacity development, quality assurance and feedback mechanism as measures to address the issue of learners' academic achievement in the institutions.

Learners' academic achievement has become the central cardinal issue in addressing the issue of learning effectiveness and improving student learning. Ojokheta (2012) contended that the main aim of distance education (DE) is to promote self-study or independent study among distance learners in the absence of regular face-to-face (F2F) teaching. He, therefore, argued that all policy designs in distance education must be related to the needs of the distance learners. Writing on the disadvantage of distance learners studying alone, Akinpelu (1995) wrote: *By reasons of being denied the psychological security of face to-face contact with his tutors or at least the possibility of consulting with him as when needed, the distance learner is at a great disadvantage vis-à-vis the internal students.*

The difficulty of this method of learning creates anxiety on the distance learners to succeed which invariably leads to some study problems. Thorpe (2002) put it succinctly: *A student who is desperately anxious to succeed can be extremely deflated by early study problems or poor performance and can drop out as a result. This anxiousness sometimes leads to nervousness probably due to lack of sensitive reading which the distance learners suffer as an independent learner.* All these reasons made Wedemeyer, as far back as 1977, to warn that "not every learner will be able to succeed by correspondence/distance instruction since this is not an easy method of learning." As a result of the disadvantages facing distance learners in their learning as highlighted above, it becomes imperative for distance learning institutions to design policies for implementation to enhance distance learners' academic achievement. It on this basis, this study examines how the institutional policies design in National Open University of Nigeria and Distance Learning Centre, University of Nigeria influence learners' academic achievement in the both institutions.

The two distance learning institutions have well-documented structures on specific areas of distance education delivery. The implementation of these structures is principally aimed at improving the academic achievement of distance learners. The policy designs of the two institutions have essentially focused on the following areas: learner support services, course material development, information communication technology, staff capacity development, feedback mechanism and quality assurance.

Policy on student support services in distance education has been considered as interventions and facilities that help distance learners cope with the technology, isolation and communication problems that might encounter during the course of study. In this view, interpersonal interaction may be regarded as a basic type of learners' support, regardless of its source, intervening or enabling media, or formal/informal status (Tait 2014). In both institutions, policy on learner support services clearly specified that student must be well guided on admission requirements and students must be provided with counseling services on admission procedures, study mode, learning skills, career counseling, academic progress, library services both at the study centres and at the headquarter.

Policy on course materials development in the equally specified the following:

i. Course materials must be written in open and distance learning format.
ii. Course materials in all designated courses must be in print.
iii. Course materials must be made available to learners before the commencement of learning activities of each academic session.
iv. Course materials must be written by tutors well-grounded in understanding the Characteristics and peculiarities of distance learning students.
v. Course materials must be written in guided didactic conversational style.

Information and communication technology (ICTs) refers to 'a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate and to create, disseminate, store and manage information (Ratheeswari, 2018). Policy on Information communication technologies in two institutions equally specified the following:

i. Provision of constant and efficient information dissemination to the learners on their academic progress and other related matters.
ii. Availability and accessibility of online course materials through the following means: provision of internet facilities, audio tapes, films, CD, telephone facilities, and radio broadcast.

The institution policy on information dissemination management majorly concern about the efficient and effective management of the design process and the team involved. The design processes involved analysis of learner's characteristics, analysis or state of learning objectives, selection of appropriate media and material utilization, sought for require learners' performance, evaluation and revision (Berge & Mrozowski, 2001). The course material development policy is the form of instructional design which is the art and competence of being able to find balance between what to teach and how to teach it, taking into account our knowledge of how people learn. The "how" of teaching encompasses the full range of instructional methods that can be used to promote quality learning? The resultant interaction between the "what" of teaching and the "how" of teaching in specific teaching situations is called an instructional strategy. Therefore, instructional design encompasses the design, development and implementation of effective instructional strategies.

Institutional policies on quality assurance to a large extent determine the effectiveness or successfulness of the teaching/learning process in distance education. Feedback policy assist learner in terms of academic support from responses or comments received from his/her assignments during the learning process. One major defining feature of distance education, according Keegan, is the quasi-permanent separation of the learners from the tutors. Essentially, therefore, teaching/learning process is conducted in distance education assignments. In other words, the tutor's response, comment or feedback pattern to assignment determines to a very large extent, the effectiveness or successfulness of teaching/learning process in distance education. Aderinoye (1992) wrote on the importance of tutor's response or comment review by Ojokheta (2000) that the most important function of a tutor is to assist the learners to achieve effective learning in his programme.

This is why assignment writing is an important requirement which keeps the distance learners and the tutors in constant communication process with positive comment from tutors. Quality assurance could summarily be viewed as grade, degree or level of excellence. Gordon and Partington (2003) see it as the success with which an institution provides educational environments, which effectively enable student to achieve learning goal including appropriate academic standard.

Distance educators ranked the area of quality assurance as the research area to be given priority attention on the meso- level that is the level of management organisation and technology.

In other words, the National Open University of Nigeria and the Distance Learning Centre, University of Nigeria have similar policy on course material development. The two institutions make provision for printed and online materials. On paper, the two institutions ensured that the course material unit of the institutions strictly adheres to the policy in making provision for learning materials and other additional learning resources to ensure success. But in practice, this study, will enquire what and how of teaching in the two institutions and how adequate, effective and efficient of the learner support services, course material development, information communication technology, staff capacity development, feedback mechanism and quality assurance influence learners' academic achievement in the both institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Research findings have shown that students in distance education faced with problem of isolation, physical and psychological separation from tutors and institution. This has brought about difficulties in learning condition of learners in open and distance learning institution. The difficulty of this method of learning creates anxiety on the distance learners to succeed which invariably leads to some study problems. In order to ameliorate the rate of failure of learners' study engagement under this condition, there is therefore, the need to examine the influence of institutional policy factors on learners' academic achievement in two distance learning institution in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

i. Determine the extent to which institutional policy factors influence learners' academic achievement in distance learning institutions.

ii. Ascertain the perception of the distance learners on how the implementation of the policies has impacted on their academic achievement.

Research Questions

i. How did the institutional policy factors influence learners' academic achievement in distance learning institutions?

ii. How did the learners perceive the implementation of the policies in relation to their academic achievement?

Literature Review: Institutional Policies in Open and Distance Education

This section reviews related work on institutional policy factors on learner supports services, course material development, information communication technology, staff capacity development, quality assurance and feedback mechanism in open and distance learning.

Institutional policy on Instructional Design and Development in Open and Distance Learning

The application of instructional design and development has evolved in line with the findings of research in education and psychology of learning and advances in technologies for teaching and learning. The role of instructional design is critical in open and distance education as distance learners are physically or geographically separate from their teachers. The instructional design process involves the identification the learners' needs, definition of instructional objectives, design of assessment, and design teaching and learning activities to ensure quality instruction (Educational Technology, 2019). Distance students are prepared to develop independent learning capability, motivate themselves to learn and engage themselves in learning activities that make them persistent and successful in learning. Open and distance education institutions are further challenged to transform themselves into the digitalization of learning and teaching, taking into accounts the learning needs and the technology supports required for learning. It is the task of distance educators to support learning and make distance learning experience enjoyable to students. Further questions are then which instructional design and development is suitable in distance learning, how media are incorporated into the learning experience of distance students, and how distance learning activities are designed and developed to motivate students to learn.

Institutional policy on Information and Communication Technology in Open and Distance Learning

Information and Communication technologies (ICTs) are diverse set of tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. K. Ratheeswari (2018) reported in his work that "ICT stands for "Information and communication technology". It refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunication". It is similar to Information Technology (IT) but focuses primarily on communication technologies". He also observed that the rapid development in technology has made creatively changes in the way we live, as well as the demands of the society. Recognizing the impact of new technologies on the workplace and everyday life, today's teacher education institutions try to restructure their education programs and classroom facilities, in order to minimize the teaching and learning technology gap between today and the future. ICTs are making dynamic changes in society. They are influencing all aspects of life. The influences are felt more and more at schools. Because ICTs provide both students and teachers with more opportunities in adapting learning and teaching to individual needs, society is, forcing schools aptly respond to this technical innovation (Ratheeswari 2018).

Institutional policy on Learner Supports Services in Open and Distance Learning

Policy on student support services in distance education has been considered as interventions and facilities that help distance learners cope with the technology, isolation and communication problems that might encounter during the course of study. The reason is that the distance learners do not meet their tutors, lecturers and classmates regularly. Faculty and support staff members have problems in identifying students who are at risk of feeling isolated (Park et al., 2011). The sense of isolation increases the risk of dropout. Kahu et al. (2013) believed that having friends is particularly important for mature distance learners who struggled to fit into the university culture. Make the right friends.

In McGhie's (2017) study, all the successful students emphasised the importance of making "right friends", i.e. those who support, encourage or assist them academically. They chose friends who were determined to succeed, and they worked together and supported each other. A student shared the following comment: "Surround yourself

with positive peers or better yet help encourage and motivate others to join you in reaching a goal. Knowing you can help and support each other makes learning less stressful and fun" (p. 417). Seek help from lecturers. Successful students in McGhie's (2017) study sought help from teaching staff as well as from peers. They reported that they were not afraid to ask questions. As a participant explained, "not be afraid to ask for help, nobody expects you to always be good at everything". Another student remarked, "I asked questions when something was not clear and I went for consultation and I received clarification on work covered" (p. 418). Gain encouragement from   the family. Encouragement and support from family members are important motivation. They help students to stay focused and work hard (McGhie, 2017; Ten Hoeve, et al., 2017).

Institutional policy on Staff Capacity Development in Open and Distance Learning

 Raciti (2012) suggested that efforts to build the staff capacity and a strong relationship between students and lecturers/tutors encourage students' academic achievement. staff capacity development was found to be helpful to students (Yang et al., 2017). One participant expressed gratitude towards the faculty and staff, saying "The first person I talked to was [Mr. J]. [Mr. J] was so enthusiastic. He answered my questions and was very encouraging that it was a great programme. Throughout my two years he has been my advisor […] any time I had a question or wasn't sure which class to focus on during my electives I would call [Mr. J]" (p. 32). All student participants who considered quitting were negative about the support from the teaching staff (Ten Hoeve et al., 2017). The authors concur on the importance of quality support from teaching staff and counselling services, especially for open and distance learning study.

Institutional policy on Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning

On quality of the programme, it was found that a well-organised study programme and the competence of teaching staff improve student learning (Ten Hoeve et al., 2017; Yangetal, 2017). Dissatisfaction with a training programme is often associated with the low quality of the programme and its teaching staff. The relevance of the content of the programme in meeting personal and professional needs and the

perceived amount of learning influence student learning academic achievement in open and distance learning programmes (Yang et al., 2017). Why do some students with enough time to study choose not to do so? Tladi (2013) found that the main reason was demotivation resulting from a high workload and difficulties in understanding the study materials. Students who considered giving up mentioned having negative experiences on the course because of difficult content or poor class organisation (Ten Hoeve et al., 2017).

Institutional policy on Feedback Mechanism in Open and Distance Learning

Feedback mechanism has been identified as one of major components of student learning engagement and motivation in open distance education. Educators have given increasing attention to engaging students in learning and motivating them to learn and how it is conducted in different learning and teaching contexts. Student engagement involves the interaction between the time, effort and resources invested by students and the institutions to optimize learning experience, enhance learning outcomes, and develop the students' performance and the institution's reputation (Trowler, 2010). Engaging students in learning is important to ensure persistence and improves academic achievement (Everett, 2015). Research has been conducted on various aspects of engagement of open and distance students in learning and findings confirm the importance of positive feedback in students learning engagement to ensure success in learning (Senior et al., 2018; Messias et al., 2015; Khe et al., 2018). There are questions to address as regards to what activities are designed and implemented to engage students in distance learning, how these activities are monitored and evaluated, and how distance students take advantage of learning engagement activities.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it allows researchers to report and analyse all variables as they occur without manipulation of any variables. The study was conducted in distance learning-based institution (National Open University of Nigeria and Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan). A sample size of 1,397 distance learners was stratified and proportionate selected from Ibadan study centre of NOUN and Ibadan

head office of Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan. participated in the study. Adapted Course Experience Questionnaire Scales developed by graduate careers Australia 2009 with reliability Coefficient of Learner Support Services (r=0.86), Course Material Development (r=0.84), Information Communication Technology(r=0.83), Staff Capacity Development (r=0.80), Quality Assurance(r=0.78), Feedback Method(r=0.75) was used to collect data for the study. The Likert format with options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA)= 4, Agree (A)= 3, Strongly Disagree (SD)= 2, Disagree (D)= 1. The instrument is divided into two parts A & B. Part A deals with respondents' personal information while Part B collected data on the variables under study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regressions at 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question 1: How did the institutional policy factors influence learners' academic achievement in distance learning institution?

Table 1(a): Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on Composite Effect of Independent Variables to learner academic achievement.

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9314.835	6	1552.473	499.754	.000a
Residual	4311.784	1388	3.106		
Total	13626.619	1394			

R = .827, R^2 = .684, Adj R^2 = .682

It was shown in the table 1 above that the combination of the six institutional policies on learners' academic achievement was significant (F (6, 1388) = 499.754; R = .827, R^2 = 684, Adj. R^2 = .682, p<.05). Besides, 68.2% of the variation was accounted for by the independent variables while the remaining 31.8% was not due to chance. This is therefore reveals that the academic achievement of learners in two institutions, to a large extent is being determined by one combination of the six independent variables. The study, like many

before it, also reveals the influence of the independent variables on learners' academic achievement in the two distance learning institutions. The combination of the six main component processes impacted on the learners' academic achievement in the two distance learning institutions. This study, therefore, in tune with McGhie's (2017) and Yang et al. (2017) have shown that either individually or collectively, the independent variable does impacts on the learners' academic achievement in the two distance learning institutions except feedback method mechanism.

Table 1(b): Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Relative Effect of Independent on learners' academic achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.343	.310		4.335	.000
Learner support services	.164	.015	.235	10.981	.000
Course materials and design development	.230	.027	.185	8.350	.000
	.299	.026	.268	11.603	.000
ICT	.164	.016	.227	10.273	.000
Staff capacity dev.	.179	.020	.187	8.768	.000
Quality Assurance scale	-.021	.025	-.019	-.861	.389
Feedback scale					

It was shown in the table 4.2.10a above that the combination of the six institutional policies on learners' academic achievement was significant (F (6, 1388) = 499.754; R = .827, R^2 = 684, Adj. R^2 = .682, p<.05). Besides, 68.2% of the variation was accounted for by the independent variables while the remaining 31.8% was not due to chance. This is therefore reveals that the academic achievement of learners in two institutions, to a large extent is being determined by one combination of the six independent variables.

Also, the result in the table 4.2.10b above showed the relative effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variables: learner support services (β = .235, p<.05), course materials development (β = .185, p<.05), ICT (β = .268, p<.05), staff capacity development (β = .227, p<.05), quality assurance (β = .187, p<.05) and feedback method (β = .019, p<.05). It is, therefore noted in the result above, that all the six institutional policies except feedback method were significant. As

revealed by the result, out of the six institutional policies, information communication technology and learner support services have the highest contribution effect to learners' academic achievement. This is because most of the respondents strongly agreed that distance learning programme would be inadequate without the two main components processes.

Research Question 2: How did the learners perceive the implementation of the policies in the above mentioned key areas of distance education practice in relation to their academic achievement?

Table 2: Frequency Count, Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation Values of Perception of Distance Learners on how the Institutional Policies impacted learners' Academic Achievement in the two Institutions

S/N	Variables	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Learner Support Services Impact	52 (3.7)	92 (6.6)	899 (64.4)	354 (25.3)	24.1433	4.36534	Agree
2	Course Material Development Impact	137 (9.8)	155 (11.1)	654 (46.8)	445 (31.9)	12.0021	2.51286	Agree
3	Information Communication Technology Impact	128 (9.2)	161 (11.5)	774 (55.4)	334 (23.9)	11.4162	2.79441	Agree
4	Staff Capacity Development Impact	163 (11.7)	133 (9.5)	807 (57.8)	294 (21.0)	19.8089	4.31347	Agree
5	Feedback Mechanism Impact	145 (10.4)	140 (10.0)	782 (56.0)	330 (23.6)	11.5533	2.86107	Agree
6	Quality Assurance Impact	85 (6.1)	149 (10.7)	870 (62.3)	293 (21.0)	14.3937	3.27090	Agree
	Total (Average)	118	138	798	342	15.5529	3.35301	Agree

The results in the Table 2 showed that about (89%) of the respondents agreed that the provision of learner support services in the institutions is very essential (X = 24.1433; SD = 4.36534). Also, it was revealed from the table that (79%) of the respondents perceived the importance of the provision of both hard and electronic copies of course materials for effective distance learning programme (X = 12.0021; SD =2.51286). About (79%) of the respondents agreed that the information communication technology played a major role in information dissemination to distance learners (X = 11.4162; SD

=2.79441). About (78%) of the respondents agreed that the staff capacity development of staffs in distance learning institutions is also very essential (X = 19.8089; SD = 4.31347).

Again, most respondents (79%) agreed that without the provision of timely feedback on learners' assignments and examinations, distance learning programme could not be sustained (X =11.5533; SD = 2.86107). Majority of the respondents (83%) also agreed that if success is to be achieved in distance learning programme emphasis should be laid on quality assurance (X =14.3937; SD =3.27090). This finding has laid credence to that of Ten Hoeve et al., (2017) and Yang et al., (2017) found that a well-organised study programme and the competence of teaching staff improve student academic achievement. The relevance of the programme in meeting personal and professional needs and the perceived amount of learning influence student academic achievement in open distance learning programmes (Yang et al., 2017).

Table 3: Cumulative Grade Performance Average (CGPA) of Learners' Academic Achievement in National Open University (2012 - 2020

S/N	Year	4.5-5.0 (very high)	3.5-4.49 (high)	2.5-3.49 (Average)	1.5-2.49 (low)	1.0-1.49 (very low)	Total	Decision
1	2011/2012 Session	0	31	83	4	0	118	Average
2	2012/2013 Session	0	37	62	14	6	119	Average
3	2013/2014 Session	0	25	77	6	2	104	Average
4	2014/2015 Session	0	27	52	9	0	88	Average
5	2015/2016 Session	1	33	74	11	1	120	Average
6	2016/2017 Session	10	641	1683	347	0	2681	Average
7	2017/2018 Session	17	903	1852	456	0	3228	Average
8	2018/2019 Session	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	2019/2020 Session	77	3469	5089	1576	0	10211	Average
	Total (Average)	105	5166	8972	2423	9	16,675	Average

The results in the Table 3 showed that the cumulative grade performance average (CGPA) of distance learners between the periods of 2012 to 2016 in National Open University of Nigeria showed that (105) learners made CGPA 4.5 to 5.0, (5166) learners made CGPA 3.5 to 4.49, (8972) learners made CGPA 2.5 to 3.49, (2423) learners made 1.5 to 2.49 while (9) learners made CGPA 1.0 to 1.49. The results revealed that highest numbers of learners made CGPA 2.5 to 3.49. This result shows that most learners performed averagely in the programme.

Table 4: Cumulative Grade Performance Average (CGPA) of Learners' Academic Achievement in Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan (2006- 2018)

S/N	Year	6.0-7.0 (very high)	4.6-5.9 (high)	2.6-4.5 (Average)	1.6-2.5 (low)	1.0-1.5 (very low)	Total	Decision
1	2005/2006 Session	0	201	562	16	19	798	Average
2	2006/2007 Session	0	70	279	9	6	364	Average
3	2007/2008 Session	1	65	227	8	3	304	Average
4	2008/2009 Session	0	36	173	7	0	216	Average
5	2009/2010 Session	2	56	136	8	11	213	Average
6	2010/2011 Session	1	19	201	14	0	234	Average
7	2011/2012 Session	5	245	1159	113	7	1529	Average
8	2012/2013 Session	1	38	299	37	2	377	Average
9	2013/2014 Session	1	63	402	74	4	544	Average
10	2014/2015 Session	4	260	1185	300	13	1762	Average
11	2015/2016 Session	9	190	988	202	21	1410	Average
12	2016/2017 Session	22	141	1399	3501	89	5152	Average
13	2017/2018 Session	15	323	1637	404	19	2418	Average
	Total (Average)	61	1707	8647	4693	194	15,322	Average

The results in the Table 4 showed that the cumulative grade performance average (CGPA) of distance learners between the periods of 2006 to 2018 in Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan showed that (61) learners made CGPA 5.0 to 6.0, (1707) learners made CGPA 4.6 to 5.9, (8647) students made CGPA 2.6 to 4.5, (4693) learners made 1.6 to 2.5 while (194) learners made CGPA 1.0 to 1.5. The results revealed that highest numbers of learners made CGPA 2.6 to 4.5. This result shows that most learners performed averagely in the programme.

Conclusion

This study has been able to establish that the provision for student support services serves as interventions and facilities that help distance learners cope with the technology, isolation and communication problems they might encounter during the course of study. While it was also discovered that the human resource input to a large extent as reflected the positive contribution to student academic achievement as the quality of teachers in distance learning programme determine the quality of output that is learning effectiveness and learners' academic achievement. It also observed from the results that the quality assurance policy factor played a major role in distance learning institutions as it has been established that the mode assessment of distance learners influences their academic achievement.

The results also revealed the importance of provision of course material in distance learning institution. The course materials or instructional material must be written in a conversational style, that is, the material must be written to show that a conversation is going on between the tutor and the learners; the language must be simple and unambiguous; the details must be carefully provided but not overloaded; the layout must be progressive, systematic, and sequential in nature; it must progress from the known to unknown; it must build upon the previous experiences of the learners. Also the provision for feedback method in the institutions also essential as reflected in the above results. The feedback pattern to assignments submitted by the distance learners was a major determinant of learners 'achievement in any distance learners programme.

In all, it was established that there is a significant, positive contribution between institutional policy factors and learners' academic achievement at the National Open University of Nigeria and Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan. It is therefore expected that if distance learning institutions pay adequate attention to institutional policy factors, students' retention and success in distance learning programmes would be enhanced. The research therefore concludes that there is need for periodic evaluation in order to be able to identify gaps or areas where improvement is required, most especially in the areas policies, systems, programmes, facilities and resources to in order to maintain high academic standards.

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Contributions of Digital Technologies to Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria

Godwin A. Nwogu, PhD
Department of Adult Education
Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract
This paper examined the contributions of digital technologies to achieving sustainable development goal 4 in Nigeria. It extensively discussed the concept and components of digital technologies as well as the education goal and targets of SDG 4 which aims at support learning, in all its shapes and forms, and influencing people's choices to create more just, inclusive and sustainable societies. It further discussed the digital technologies for achieving SDG 4 educational targets and impacts of using digital technologies for the SDG 4 educational targets. The paper recommended the need for massive investment in digital technologies for educational purposes and the need for education policy makers to integrate digital technologies in action plans developed to meet commitments to achieving SDG 4 targets in Nigeria and concluded that the integration of digital technologies in action plans will help Nigeria to be on track to achieve SDG 4.

Keywords: Digital Technologies, SDG 4 Educational Goal, SDG 4 Educational Targets.

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 while its adoption took place in September 2015 by all United Nations Member States. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world. The SDGs replaced the