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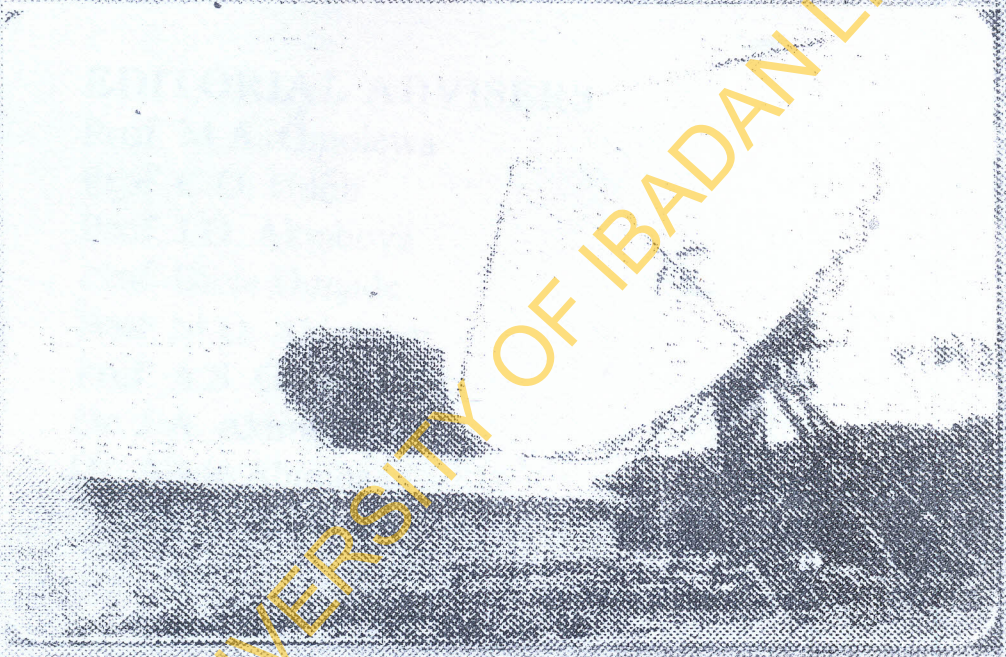
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RESOURCES AND RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION.

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ABSTRACT

The study on effects of resources and resource utilization in Distance Education opened with a short history of Distance Education in Nigeria. The traditional rulers had a way of disseminating information to their subjects through the help of town criers. The Federal Government of Nigeria gave a legal backing to Distance Education in 1977. The paper addressed such issues as resources in terms of finance, human, materials and instructional time. The paper ends by exploring the use of resources in Distance Education.

INTRODUCTION

Distance Education is synonymous with Open Education. Correspondence Education, External Study, Home Study, Off Campus Study and so on. Distance Education became popular and authentic in Nigeria when the Federal Government endorsed the programme in 1977 by including in the National Policy on Education (NPE) her support for the programme.

Before 1977 there has been Distance Education in the traditional Nigeria Society through the medium of town criers and talking drums (Omolewa; 1982). The town criers and talking drums carried the messages of the traditional rulers to their subjects. After the introduction of the formal education in Nigeria, it became necessary to have Distance Education to cater for such people who are unable to afford the regular, face-to-face education; to that effect, Nigerians started to establish their own Correspondence Colleges in 1943 (Omolewa; 1978). The first was the city Correspondence College in 1943 which did not last. Other correspondence Colleges were established later. Ajayi (1985) reported that in 1967, the first attempt by the Nigerian University started when Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria started the Teacher-In-Service Education Programme (TISEP). This by ABU was actually TISEP's second emergence, the first was instituted by the Northern Nigeria Ministry of Education in the late 50s but had to pack up because of the civil war in 1966. After the civil war however, many Correspondence Education Centres were established in Ibadan, Abeokuta, Lagos, Calabar, Ijebu-Ode and so on.

The importance of Distance Education was attested to by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the 1977 NPE, Section 7:12

> Correspondence Education (otherwise known as Distance Education) will be encouraged, being a low-cost method of mass education. An additional statement with respect to Distance Education stated that Maximum efforts will be made to enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given assess to it. Such assess may be through universities or correspondence course or open Universities or part-time and work study programmes.

Apart from legal backing of the Federal Government through the policy statements, some scholars also have come up with their arguments in favour of Distance Education. For examples, Adegoke (1989) pointed out that adopting Distance Education in Nigeria was because workers desire educational programme that will allow them receive their full pay while schooling. He pointed out again that other workers have limited time to stay on full time basis because of their jobs which compel them to work at irregular hours like doctors and nurses. Paiko; (1990), in his study observed that education at the post secondary school level is a gateway to success for individuals in life. According to him, it is not possible for the conventional face-to-face system to offer this to all except supplemented through Distance Education. Again, he stressed further that Distance Education caters for a scattered population, that is, bringing education to those without primary assess to normal or conventional face-to-face system of education.

WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Moore (1977) defined Distance Education as the family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviors are executed apart from the learning behaviors, including those that in a contiguous situation would be performed in the learner's presence, so that communication between the learner and the teacher must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanicals and other devices. According to Holmberg (1977), Distance Education is the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the conscious, immediate supervision of tutor, present with their students in lecture room or in the same premises but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning of guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization. In this paper, we will define Distance Education as a means by which an organized instruction is offered to the learner who is often geographically separated from the teacher with the aim of changing the learner's behavior (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) such that feedback is facilitated through print, electronic device courier and other forms of information channels. In this type of Education four components are usually involved, these are: the teacher; the learner; the content of instruction; and the channel (instructional media) of information, (see Distance Education Model developed by the author on the last page).

WHAT IS RESOURCE?

Resource in education, whether the conventional face-to-face or distance education

is the sum total of everything that goes into any given education system. Resource in this paper means the total input which goes into the Distance Education Programme. There are four resources to he discussed in this paper; these are:

i) Financial resource
ii) Human resource
iii) Material resource
iv) Instructional time resource

FINANCIAL RESOURCE

Financial resource is taken to mean the cost of Distance Education. Cost in education is usually in terms of real resource used up in the production of a given unit output. There is the social cost as well as the private cost. The former is the cost borne by the society, that is, the government while the later is the cost borne by individuals.

(a) Social cost: This is sub-divided into two categories; viz: capital and recurrent expenditure. Money expended on building of physical structure like a lecture or examination hall, library provision or furniture, machines, provision of textbooks, instructional media and so on some under capital cost. Money expended on the payment of salary provision of consumable items, maintenance of physical structure (building), instructional media and other facilities, money expended on honorarium and royalty come under recurrent cost.

(b) Private cost: This includes financial contributions by families and individuals for education. It is made up of tuition fees, cost of learners' textbooks, transportation cost, postage and other sundry expenses by the learners.

HUMAN RESOURCE

Human resource is expressed in terms of learners enrolments, number of staff members like Distance Education Coordinator (in some other places the Coordinator is referred to as the Directors), Registrar, course writers, Student Welfare Officers, Editors, Store Keepers, Accountant, Marketing Officers, Admission Officers. Other Administrative members and Typist.

MATERIAL RESOURCE

This includes number of school buildings in form of number of hostels, classrooms provided and number of libraries, furniture books, writing materials like biros, pencils, rulers, erasers, sharpeners and other instructional materials.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME RESOURCE

In this paper, the number of days the learners spend when they come for revision is known as the school days. Time resource in this paper is the number of hours education is opened to learners per school day. Instructional time resource is the

total allocated by the Distance Education system for each curriculum and the extent to which this time is being used for the prescribed curriculum over a week and over a school year.

RATIONALE FOR THE CURRENT STUDY

Scholars are in agreement that resources are very important for the success of any worthwhile education (both the conventional face-to-face and Distance Eduacation) endeavours (Vartzey; 1968, Taiwo; Bowels; 1974, Field; 1974, and Adaralegbe 1983). These scholars pointed out that the availability of funds, human (students, teaching and non-teaching staff), materials, and time resources are necessary for the attainment of any educational objectives. This study is relevant and important to Distance Education because teaching and learning processes are carried out by the availability and use of the resources earlier mentioned. In this wise, it is important to note that:

i)   if the resources are inadequate or poor in terms of their quantity and quality, not only will the use of the resources be defective, but the learning process will also be defective.

ii)   if the resources are adequate in terms of their quantity and quality, but they are not used, that is, the resources are kept in the store and not used (Bajah; 1979), the learning process will be adversely affected.

iii)   if on the other hand, the resources are available, relevant and reasonably adequate and in addition, prudently utilized, there is the likelihood that the learning will be utilized.

RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

The level of use of all the resources mentioned earlier is referred to as resource utilization. Financial resource has been recognised as a major factor in the development of any educational system. A study conducted by Pitts (1977) in selected Texas School Districts investigated the relationships between the use of finance and school success in terms of students' performance. He found out that there exist a significant relationship between that portion of the School District budget allocated to instructional salaries with students' academic achievement.

Teachers have been recognized as indispensable human resource, and in fact, the single most important elements in the Distance Educational system, more important than the quality and quantity of equipment and materials or the level of financing (Bowels; 1979). The teacher and his roles are perceived so important that a Provost of a College of Education, who was justifying the hiring of a particular lecturer in Chemistry who was known to be useless in the department said that ".......... I had to recruit just anybody. I would not have minded having a dummy standing in front of the students to assure the students that quality of any Distance Educational system depends on the teacher's quality and the success of the educational system (Manson 1981). He pointed out that the quality of teachers is an important input in effective learning since quality output demands quality

input. Taiwo (1980) has equally pointed out that teachers are very vital in any educational system as they are the ones who interpret the aims, goals and plans of education and ensure that the learners educated in the direction of those aims and objectives. Babalola (1979) said that majority of the studies on students' academic achievement have generally taken the form of finding out that human variables correlate highly with learners' achievement and can be used as predicator of students' achievement. Apart from teachers, other human resource in Distance Education is the Editor, since the learner is separated from the teacher geographically, it means that course material must be made available to the learners in their locality, it is the role of the editor to make sure that the course materials are written out well in terms of tense, organization of the content and the design of the course material. Marketing editor is another human resource who makes sure that the course materials are printed and are made available to the students either by post, through couriers or by contact. Store keeper who also is a part of human resource makes sure that books (course materials) not yet sold are kept properly. The services of all these human beings are geared towards producing a successful Distance Education to the learners who are unable to make themselves available for the conventional face-to-face system of education.

Akinwumiju and Orimoloye (1987) stated in support of material resource for educational system that:

> Educational institutions from nursery to university require building for their effective operations. Classrooms, offices, assembly halls, laboratories, and staff-quarters are needed. Within the buildings there should be fixtures and fittings to make them useable, the infrastructural facilities included here are important items like furniture for staff and sport equipments., and other items. These facilities have to be adequate in number and they should be in good condition for schools to function properly.

Hallak (1990) identified facilities as major factors contributing to academic achievement in the school system. These include the school buildings, classroom accommodation, libraries, laboratories, furniture, recreational equipment, apparatus and other instructional materials.

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