

IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) ON DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME OF NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, DEKINA STUDY CENTRE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the impact of ICT on distance learning programme of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna, Dekina Study Centre. The study provided answers to three research questions. Survey design was adopted and a total of 196 respondents was used as sample using proportionate stratified random sampling to draw the sample. Four Likert scale questionnaire was administered and mean score statistics was used for the analysis. The findings made among others include: ICT has a strong impact on distance learning programme and that it is only internet services that is commonly used by students at the centre. Based on the findings, recommendations were made, counseling implications and conclusion were drawn.

KEYWORDS: *ICT, Distance Learning, National Teachers*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology is known to play a functional role in man's every day's activities all over the world and this had helped in reducing the World to a Global Village. Therefore, ICT has become so impactful in all aspects of human development like Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine, Industries as well as the educational sector. The application of ICT as a new development in education has powered way for the instructor (s) to discharge or deliver learning to learners in diverse ways, and this has therefore simplified learning in such a way that learners can go at their own space as well assessing learning materials outside the institution and even outside the country through the application of information and communication technology.

The development of any Nation of the world today is synonymous to the investment made in the lives of her citizenry. This implies that the development of an individual person will make him or her impact on his or her nation positively and this accounts for the fact that government at all levels are making frantic efforts towards ensuring that everybody irrespective of age and race should have access to education.

The provision of education to many people at a time has led to the policy of distance learning programme and the speedy vehicle towards ensuing the realization of this goal is the application of ICT to learning. World Bank (2002) also perceived that ICT has the convergence of activities that facilitate capturing, processing, transmission of information through digital electronic devices, telecommunication, internet, World Wide Web, virtual reading and cyber space. On the concept of distance education, Hartley (2004) defined it as the use of a synchronous technologies to assist both the traditional and distance learners to identify and achieve their maximum educational potential which enables them to achieve their educational goals.

The impact of ICT on all spheres of human endeavors have been so tremendous. Most remarkable is the education sector which has been transformed by the use of ICT and where ICT are used for learning, evidences suggests than they are chiefly used to present and disseminate information as tools for presentation rather than the often cited promotion of 21st century skills. (Omosho, Adeef, Amusa and Bello 2005). On this note, Liberero (2006) observed that conventional Universities and other educational institutions are now using ICT to achieve blended learning environments which blend traditional face to face classroom delivery with distance delivery.

The use of ICT in distance learning has helped in reshaping the entire academic organizational structures. West-brook (2001) observed that the introduction of ICT in education has resulted in changes in four core areas of education such as curriculum, role of teachers and students organizational structures and learning environment given that a growing number of transactions now take place on line at a distance, appropriately automated systems for recording these transactions tracking them keeping and retrieving students records and therefore must be supported by holistic policies that take into account academic related activities.

Advancement in education has given room for using various tools that will enhance the dissemination of information to learners, but it should be noted that there could be many challenges to this effect. On this note, Hartley (2004) concluded that the technological revolution has not reached academic or advising systems. He reached the conclusion by noting that only 2 to 10 technologies used to support the work of teachers were found in more than 50% of campuses.

The place of ICT in distance learning programme cannot be underestimated. The availability of ICT facilities in an institution of learning is known to enhance learning. The availability of ICT facilities in an institution of learning is not an automatic guarantee for its application. Even if available, are learners judiciously making use of them? and if put to us, is there any record of impact on the learners? If available, is it beneficial to learners?. This is because of the challenges attached to it or that the learners are scared in their application because of the enormous challenges attached.

These are numerous issues that this study intends to address noting the impact of ICT on distance education, types of ICT available at the NTI, Kaduna, Dekina Study Centre, as well as the challenges facing its applications in the study areas.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of ICT on distance education. A case study of the NTI at Government Science Secondary School Dekina Study Centre Specifically, the objectives of the study include.

- To find out the impact of ICT on the distance learning program of the NTI Dekina Study Centre

- To check the types of ICT facilities used by students at the Study Centre.
- To determine the likely problems encountered by students of Distance learning in their application of ICT.
- To unveil the counseling implications

Research Questions

- Do the applications of ICT have any impact on the distance learning program of the National Teachers' Institute, Dekina Study Centre?
- What are the types of ICT facilities used by students of distance learning program of NTI, Dekina Study Centre?
- What are the problems facing the application of ICT at the distance learning program at the Dekina Study Centre?
- Any counseling implications?

Scope of the Study

The study is centered on the distance learning program of NTI, Dekina Study Centre. The study is limited to assessing the impact of information and communication technology on the distance learning program of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna, Dekina Study Centre.

Research Procedure

This research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey. The area of study was Government Science Secondary School Dekina Study Centre of the distance learning program of the National Teachers' Institute Kaduna.

The population for the study embraced all the facilitators, Centre Desk Officer and Students of National Teachers' Institute Kaduna, Dekina Study Centre in PES/SOS, PES/ITS, PHE and PES/CRS departments, with a total of four hundred (400) persons comprising of students Facilitators and other centre officers. The sample size drawn from the population was a total of One Hundred and Ninety Six (196) respondents which was drawn using Research advisor (2006) Sample size table. To distribute the figure fairly, the researcher adopted the use of Ndagi (1999) proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a self designed, structured questionnaire tagged "Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Distance Learning Questionnaire" (ICTDQ). The instrument was 17 items comprising of two sections A and B. Section A contained information on the respondents' bio data while section B was designed to collect information on the major variables of the study. The instrument used was 4 Likert scale questionnaire of strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) strongly disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The validation of the instrument was carried out by experts in Research Method at the Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Kogi State.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out by the researchers who administered 10 copies of the questionnaire on the respondents who were outside the original respondents for the study. The collected instrument was collected and tested using Cronbach Alpha Reliability co-efficient, which yielded an Alpha level of .75 which is considered high enough to be used for the study.

Data Analysis and Results

To answer the research questions, mean score tables were used.

Research Question 1

Do the applications of Information and Communication Technology have any impact on the distance learning program of the National Teachers Institute Dekina Study Centre?

Table 1: Means Score Distribution of Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Distance Learning Programme N = 196

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	YX	X	Decision
1.	ICT is assisting in reaching out to large population even in rural areas	100	60	10	20	620	3.16	Accepted
2.	ICT helps to improve cost efficiency in Education	90	80	10	10	510	2.60	Accepted
3.	ICT is contributing strongly to distance learning education	80	100	-	10	630	3.21	Accepted
4.	ICT has removed barrier of accessing instructor that are far away.	70	80	20	20	580	2.95	Accepted
5.	The use of ICT has enhanced access to quality education	102	80	8	-	664	3.38	Accepted

A= accepted

Overall average mean=3.05

Table 1 shows clearly that item number 1 had the mean of 3.16, number 2 – 2.60, number 3 – 3.21, number 4, 2.95 and number 5 had 3.38 and the average mean stands at 3.05 which is far above the benchmark of 2.50.

It is therefore clear that ICT has a strong impact on the distance learning program of National Teacher Institute Kaduna, Dekina Study Center.

Research Question 2 What are the types of Information and Communication Technology facilities used by the students of distance learning program of National Teachers' Institute Kaduna, Dekina Study Center?

Table 2: Mean score Distribution on the Type of ICT Facilities Used by Students of the Distance Learning Programme N=196

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	SD (2)	D (1)	YX	X	Decision
6.	We use computer at the centre	40	30	80	46	456	2.32	Not used
7.	We make use of internet services	80	70	20	26	576	2.93	Used
8.	We also use broadcast media	-	-	100	96	296	1.51	Not used
9.	There is an ICT laboratory at the centre.	-	-	108	88	304	1.55	Not used

N.U –Not used, U-used

Overall average mean=2.07

From the available record of 2.07 overall average mean, it is clear that it is the only internet service that is commonly used by the student at the Study Centre.

Research question 3. What are the problems facing the application of Information and Communication Technology at the distance learning program?

Table 3: Mean Score Distribution on the Problems Facing the Application of ICT on Distance Learning Programme at the Dekina Study Centre N=196

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	YX	X	Decision
10.	Lack of fund to purchase ICT facilities	88	70	10	18	600	3.06	Accepted
11.	Students are not accessing ICT appropriately	100	70	-	26	636	3.24	Accepted
12.	Student lack inadequate skill in using ICT for distance learning	80	90	10	16	626	3.19	Accepted
13.	There is an epileptic power supply.	90	100	-	6	666	3.39	Accepted

A = Accepted.

Overall average mean= 3.22

It is clear from the above record that the application of Information and Communication Technology on the distance learning program at the centre is facing a lot of challenges.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding of the study is done in the order of research questions.

Research question one revealed that information and communication technology has a strong impact on the distance learning program of the National Teachers' Institute, Dekina study center. This could be as a result of all the benefits derived from using ICT which is clearly demonstrated on the outcome of learning.

In agreement with this Omotosho, Lateef, Amusa and Bello (2015) averred that the impact of ICT on all spheres of human endeavors have been tremendous, most remarkable is education sector which has been transformed by the use of ICT.

The study also revealed that internet services are the most common type of ICT used by the students at the centre. This could be due to the fact that the internet has become necessary for student application such as the downloading of paid school fees to the NTI headquarters.

Finally, the study found that the application of ICT on distance learning programme is facing a lot of challenges. In agreement with this finding, Mejuini and Obilade (2006) assert that many people in developing countries live below the poverty line (below US \$2) and expend most of their income on food. This is an indication of poverty, leaving them with no money to acquire modern technologies (ICTs) and quality education.

Counselling Implications

The discussion on the counselling implications of the study followed the dimension of Rogers approach to counselling. Highlighting the goals of counselling under this Akinade (2012) said that the theory is directly concerned with the individual, the counsellor facilitates the client towards realistic self perception., greater confidence and self direction, sense of positive worth, greater maturity, social skill and adaptive behaviour, better stress copying-more fully developed in all aspects of their lives and adopt more realistic goals for himself/herself.

Bearing the above in mind, it therefore implies that the work of the counsellor in this approach becomes simplified. Counsellors then should ensure that the students understand the impact that ICT had on distance learning education and work towards personal development in this regard.

Rogers placed emphasis on facilitative conditions for client's optimum performance. That the counsellor should therefore work towards ensuring that the authority of distance learning programme make adequate provision of ICT Facilities at the centre for proper teaching and learning.

The theory also understand the potentiality of the client or learners as being skillful, greater maturity and fully developed in all aspects of their lives, the counselor therefore should enlighten the authorities of the distance learning programme to engage students with practical skills that would enable them to fully access other areas of ICT applications that will enhance their growth.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of ICT in teaching and learning especially as it affects the distance learning programme cannot be underestimated. ICT is known to give speed to learning. ICT can be properly applied to teaching if the users are literate (computer wise) but the fact remains that many of the users are illiterate and some of them cannot access ICT facilities because of some factors and even where it is available, what of the epileptic nature of power supply. It equally have implication for counseling.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

- Government, especially the management of National Teachers' Institute Kaduna should make provision of ICT facilities and distribute to all the study centers of their distance learning programmes.
- Availability of ICT facilities is not enough, it becomes more important when learners access them. Therefore, students of distance learning program should be encouraged to patronize ICT.
- Both the Facilitators and students at the various study centers on the distance learning program should ensure that they are computer literate
- The management of the distance learning program of the National Teachers' Institute Kaduna should devise a means of rectifying all the challenges facing the application of ICT in distance learning.
- Online counseling should be encouraged in Distance Learning Program.

Computers have greatly simplified all aspects of assessment as well as the development of a test. Counselors now facilitate their work through the use of internet diagnostic software packages and can easily reach the distance education students. The counsellor reaches them in their vocational, education and personal counseling and can reach as many clients as possible. Butcher, Persy and Hahn (2004) remarked that computer generated reports have become a vital tool, however not as a substitute for clinical judgment but equally as an end to help counsellor make score of client experience form to plan effective treatment. This claims are equally supported by Lichtenberger, 2006; Trull, 2007.

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