



Staff Development and Facilitators' Effectiveness in Instructional Delivery in Open and Distance learning in Rivers State.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated staff development and facilitators' effectiveness in instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers state. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised of 1,790 male and female facilitators. Sample size was 400 male and female facilitators. A self structured instrument was used titled Staff Development and Facilitators' Effectiveness in Instructional Delivery in Open and Distance Learning (SDFEIDODL). The instrument was validated by experts' judgment of two lecturers in measurement and evaluation from the Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method, reliability co-efficient of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was recommended that government should organize staff training for all staff members because of its impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. The study concluded that facilitators' development in their area of specialization is necessary to ensure that the facilitators are enabled to serve the students and in turn the society.

Keywords: facilitators' effectiveness, instructional delivery, open and distance, staff development

Introduction

The terms distance education or distance learning have been in use and have been applied interchangeably by many different researchers and institutions for a number of programs, providers, audience and media. Perraton, as cited in Marriss, (2012) defines 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 learner. Keegan as cited in Marriss, (2012) also identify the key characteristics of distance education. According to him, distance education is a form of education characterized by the quasi-permanent separation of facilitator and learner throughout the length of the learning process. It also involves the use of technical media-print, audio, video or computer to unite facilitators and learner and carry the content of the course. This is the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue and the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that students are usually taught as individuals rather than in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings, either face-to-face or by electronic means, for both didactic and socialization purposes.

Jankiramah, (2017) explained that distance education is able to deal with large numbers of students more cost-effectively than conventional schools have proved to do. It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realize their ambitions and fulfill their potential. According to Hannay & Newvine as cited in Marriss, (2012), distance education has provided opportunity for a wide range of people who, due to such factors as employment, marital status, family responsibilities, pandemic, and distance would not have been able to access formal education. In addition, a number of media such as print, radio, social media and television have been used to deliver distance education. It has been propelled by the increasing realization of the need and pursuit of continuing learning (Garrison, as cited in Owusu-Mensah, 2015). The 2030 agenda for sustainable development was adopted by all member state of the United State in 2015 to address issues of peace and prosperity globally

Most staff engaged in distance education received their formal education and worked mainly within the conventional face-to-face educational institutions which have different traits from distance education delivery and learners. As a result, if open and distance learning staffs are not equipped with the necessary skills, this can lead to high dropout rate among distance learners or half baked graduates which leads to low employability. Panda, as cited in Owusu-Mensah (2015) stated that this situation raises the need for institutional emphasis on staff development programs and human resource development policy for teaching, technical, administrative staff and part-time staff associated with the operations of distance education institutions. The roles of the distance education facilitators are crucial to the success of the distance education programs. Beaudoin as cited in Jankiramah (2017) argues that facilitators that are used to conventional education practices so have to acquire new skills to assume expanded roles not only to teach distance education learners, but also to organize instructional resources suitable in content and format for independent study. Open and distance learning is rooted in rapidly evolving technologies, an element that facilitators are not accustomed to managing.

The role of facilitators in open and distance learning in the educational system cannot be emphasized in view of the current events in the world, hence the need for staff development. The impact of COVID-19 and other unfolding events in the world has rendered the conventional classroom ineffective to properly reach some categories of persons who for some reasons are unable to attend school, which open and distance learning provides at all levels. It

has been the concern of stakeholders (government, parents, teachers, school administrators and so on) that the Goal 4 of the sustainable development goals for action to reduce inequality and instigate strategy for economic growth in both developed and developing countries be attained. This goal can only be attained if learning goes beyond the conventional classrooms to reach those that are unreached through the use of media and correspondents. With this and only this can education be inclusiveness, equitable and promote lifelong learning opportunities for everyone.

Facilitators as educators are in the fore front as, the vanguards of this educational policy. In that regard facilitators need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to properly disseminate the right knowledge to the students. This concern stem from the fact that facilitator in open and distance learning in order to improve education have to be equipped with skills to operator modern technologies in relation to their work and also most have subject mastery in their area of specialization. One way of achieving quality in open and distance learning is by providing training and regular in-service education for facilitators to ensure that they can cope with the technological developments and changes in open and distance learning. Teaching in virtual environments demands mastery of several teaching competencies. It is in line with this that this study investigated staff development and facilitators' effectiveness in instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Therefore the main purpose of this study is to evaluate Staff Development and Facilitators' Effectiveness in Instructional Delivery in Open and Distance learning in Rivers State. Specifically, the objective sought to achieve the following objectives. To assess the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in opens and distance learning in Rivers State. To find out the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Research Question

1. What extent does staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State?
2. What extent does facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of 1,790 males and females teachers from public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The sample size was 400 teachers consisting of males and females gotten through Taro Yamane's formula. The instrument used for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled: Staff Development and Facilitators' Effectiveness in Instructional Delivery in Open and Distance Learning (SDFEIDODL). The research designed questionnaire containing 10 items was used for data collection. The item on the instrument was structured on 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE); High Extent (HE); Low Extent (LE); and Very Low Extent (VLE) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. It was validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation from Educational Management Department in Rivers State University Port Harcourt. The reliability was tested and Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain reliability index of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean. Questionnaire items with ratings below 2.50 denoted 'Low Extent' while 2.50-2.99 denoted 'High Extent and 3.00 and above signified 'Very High Extent'. The hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Analyzed data therefore, with calculated z-value above the z-critical value of ± 1.96 was rejected and below ± 1.96 was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: What extent does staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State?

Table 4.1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State

S/No	Item	Female Teachers (N = 250)			Male Teachers (N = 150)		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Giving staff good orientation on instructional delivery enhances the staff development	3.01	0.87	HE	2.99	0.86	HE
2.	Staff development on self-learning materials has positive impact on the staff development.	3.11	0.82	HE	2.87	0.85	HE
3.	Training staff or teachers on good lesson note writing has significant impact on the staff development	3.20	0.89	HE	3.19	0.89	HE
4.	Proper induction and orientation of staff enhances staff development in open and distance learning prorarmame.	3.04	0.87	HE	3.02	0.87	HE
5.	Staff development programme increase the quality of their teaching.	3.01	0.87	HE	2.99	0.86	HE
	Grand Score	3.07	0.88		3.01	0.87	

Source: Field Data 2022.

The analysis in Table 4.1 revealed that the respondents accepted the point that giving staff good orientation on instructional delivery enhances the staff development. The study still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that staff development on self-learning materials has positive impact on the staff development. It was also observed in the analysis that the respondents accepted the fact that training staff or teachers on good lesson note writing has significant impact on the staff development. The study showed that the respondents agreed on the point that proper induction and orientation of staff enhances staff development in open and distance learning programame. The analysis revealed that the respondents accepted the fact staff development programme increase the quality of their teaching.

Research Question Two: What extent does facilitators' subject mastery on impact instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State?

Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of the extent facilitators' subject mastery on impact instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State

S/No	Item	Female Teachers (N = 250)			Male Teachers (N = 150)		
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
6.	Facilitators' subject mastery improves their job performance in teaching and learning.	3.20	0.89	HE	3.14	0.89	HE
7.	Facilitators' good subject mastery helps to grow potentials of the facilitators.	3.12	0.88	HE	3.04	0.87	HE
8.	Facilitators' subject mastery improves the employee or facilitator engagement with the students.	3.17	0.89	HE	3.19	0.89	HE
9.	Good training of facilitators on subject mastery gives the institution an opportunity for flexibility to expand.	3.01	0.87	HE	2.99	0.86	HE
10.	Facilitators' subject mastery gives the institution opportunity to innovate and compete with others.	3.11	0.88	HE	2.87	0.85	HE
	Grand Score	3.12	0.88		3.05	0.87	

Source: Field Data 2022.

The data analysis in Table 4.2 indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that facilitators' subject mastery improves their job performance in teaching and learning. The analysis also showed that the respondents accepted the point that facilitators' good subject mastery helps to grow potentials of the facilitators. It was also noticed from the study that the respondents agreed that facilitators' subject mastery improves the employee or facilitator engagement with good training. The analysis also revealed that the respondents accepted the fact that good training of facilitators on subject mastery gives the institution an opportunity for flexibility to expand. The study still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that facilitators' subject mastery gives the institution opportunity to innovate and compete with others.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Table 4.3: Z-test Analysis of significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Status	N	Mean X	Standard Deviation	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Female Teachers	250	3.07	0.83	398	1.29	1.96	Accepted
Male Teachers	150	3.01	0.87				

The analysis on Table 4.3 revealed that the z-cal of 1.29 is less than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is smaller than the given critical value of z-ratio. So, the hypothesis 1 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Table 4.4: Z-test Analysis of significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Status	N	Mean X	Standard Deviation	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Female Teachers	250	3.12	0.88	398	1.24	1.96	Accepted
Male Teachers	150	3.05	0.87				

The analysis on Table 4.4 indicated that the z-cal of 1.24 is less than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is less than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypothesis 2 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

Discussions

Finding was discussed based on the objectives of the study:

The finding of the study on research question one: what extent does staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State revealed that staff training has significant impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. However, the corresponding hypothesis 1 was accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. This finding was in line with Hsiao & Barak, (2014) view that giving staff good orientation on instructional delivery enhances the staff development. The study still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that staff development on self-learning materials has positive impact on the staff development. It was also observed in the analysis that the respondents accepted the fact that training staff on good lesson note writing has significant impact on the staff development. The study showed that the respondents agreed on the point that proper induction and orientation of staff enhances staff development in open and distance learning programme. The analysis revealed that the respondents accepted the fact staff development programme increase the quality of their teaching

The study in research question two: what extent does facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State reveals that facilitators' subject mastery has positive impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. So, the corresponding hypothesis 2 was accepted and the conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female teachers on the extent facilitators' subject mastery impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. This finding is in agreement with the writings of (Melissa 2013) who asserts that facilitators' subject mastery improves their job performance in teaching and learning. The analysis also showed that the respondents accepted the point that facilitators' good subject mastery helps to grow potentials of the facilitators. It was also noticed from the study that the respondents agreed that facilitators' subject mastery improves the employee or facilitator engagement with the students. The analysis also revealed that the respondents accepted the fact that good training of facilitators on subject mastery gives the institution an opportunity for flexibility to expand. The study still indicated that the respondents agreed on the view that facilitators' subject mastery gives the institution opportunity to innovate and compete with others.

Conclusion

Staff Development and Facilitators' Effectiveness in Instructional Delivery in Open and Distance learning in Rivers State cannot be over emphasized. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that staff training impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning and that facilitators' subject mastery impact positively on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State. The study also deduced that one way of achieving quality in open and distance learning is providing training and regular in-service education for facilitators to ensure that they can cope with the technological developments and changes in open and distance learning. Teaching in virtual environments demands mastery of several teaching competencies

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

1. It is recommended that government should organize staff training for all the facilitators because of its impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State
2. It is recommended that adequate provision should be made for re-training of practicing facilitators' on subject mastery hence it has significant impact on instructional delivery in open and distance learning in Rivers State.

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