

**LECTURERS' PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGES OF
DEVELOPMENT COURSE WARE FOR OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING
IN NIGERIA: A CASE OF DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTE (DLI),
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS.**

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Abstract

The study investigated Lecturers' Perception of the challenges of, developing courseware in the Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos. The purpose of the study was to determine the challenges faced by lecturers in developing courseware materials and also to find out if the perception of these challenges differs by gender and years of experience of the lecturers. The sample for the study was made up of 126 lecturers (full time and Adjunct) DLI, University of Lagos. The instrument used was a 19 item Likert-type scale questionnaire designed by the researchers. The mean average statistics was used to measure the perception of respondents on some variables. Based on the statistical analysis it was observed that there is significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on gender. Also there is significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on years of Experience. The analysis of the research instrument indicated that the time given for course material development is too short hence low quality in the materials, most of the external writers not technically trained in ODL procedures have difficulty putting materials together in line with ODL. However, there are processes in place for quality assurance of course materials, Hands-on information technology workshops for academic staff on how to assess and use open educational resources (OER) are available and there are facilities in place for easy communication between the facilitators and course writers, though very low bandwidth for internet services within the university makes the internet not available for use at the e-library. Further trainings should be available for lecturers on course ware writing as well as adequate motivation provided for lecturers to enhance quality production of course materials.

Keywords: Course Ware Development, Open Educational Resources, Open Distance Education and Information technology.

Introduction

Open Distance Learning is an alternative to regular university education. In recent times, attention has been focused on the use of open distance education mode as a means for providing education to different categories of individuals who would have been denied access to education if it were to be only face-to-face mode of learning that exists. It is the type of education that provides an opportunity for an individual to study and earn his or her degree (first degree, Masters and even PhD degrees) without regular attendance on a campus. Open distance education entails that a learner be provided with course materials that are detailed, interactive and easy to understand which the learner can study on his or her own without necessarily consulting a tutor. As the name implies, Open Distance Education is defined to give opportunity to mature learners who still have the need for updating their certificates, improving their knowledge and skills and making career progress without losing their means of livelihood. Distance Education according to Plan for action for a decade of Distance Education in Nigeria, 2001-2010 refers to:

Various methods by which a variety of media and technologies are used to provide and /or improve access to good quality education to large numbers people either because they missed the opportunity earlier in life or because their socio – economic situation would not permit them to acquire education through formal education school system.

Distance education is characterized by quasi – separation of the teachers and learners. The learners are expected to embark on their learning primarily on their own. For this to be achieved effectively, the learning or course materials have to be up to standard and have to be prepared in a such a way that the reader would benefit from it maximally,

In this regard, open distance education is suitable for individuals who are interested in working (keeping their jobs) and learning. According to Mwilongo (2015) open distance learning is a field of education that focuses on teaching and learning methods and technology with the aim of fostering teaching and learning process often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. Magoma (2012) sees open distance education as all arrangement for providing instruction through print and or electronic communication media to persons engaged in planned learning in a place and time different from that of the instructor. Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2011) further adduced that, open distance learning is aimed at bridging the time, geographical, economic, social, and educational and community distance between students and institutions, students and academics, students and peers. Liu (2008) sees distance education as a process whereby tutors and students are separated spatially and by time. Learners have no more reason to attend regular classes in open distance education. They are reached through provision of readable materials that are interactive in nature, so that the materials presents to them the information needed as if it were taught in a classroom setting. Croft, Dalton and Grant (2010) says that prior to the use of internet; two approaches to distance learning were developed and used. These are the paper-

reliant approach; where course materials are produced and sent to learners and the use of instructional videos and television.

Weller (2002) in Croft et al (2010) says that distance learning applies mainly the constructivism pedagogical approach in which learners are required to actively construct their own knowledge, based on personal experiences. Weller went further to say that a resource based approach to teaching requires that learners consult a wide range of materials and sources independently of the tutor providing the freedom to explore information that best suit their learning styles. Connolly, Jones and O'shea (2005) are of the opinion that one of the major challenges of open distance education is developing appropriate materials which the learners need to successfully embark on their learning. Course materials need to be produced with utmost professional procedure. This means that the materials produced whether paper or to be deployed on the internet for the learners must be up to publishing standards. Willis (1994) says that materials produced for open distance learners must not be infringe on copy right, materials must be up – to – date and must be in appropriate format. Petroman and Petroman (2013) opines that planning and writing learning materials for open distance learning is a true challenge no matter the type of academic institution. Petroman and Petroman went further to note that there is a great difference between learner materials for distance open learning and other types of materials and textbooks. Learning materials for open distance learning has different features that make it unique. Rata (2013) revealed that there are different dissimilarities between learning materials used in open distance learning and other textbooks. Some of these include

- Open distance learning materials
- Addresses individual learners
- Addresses the learner directly using words such as you,
- Are divided into sub units to represent weekly work or study plan
- Attempts to meet all the needs of the learner
- Have study guide that will tell the learner hoe to use the study material
- Include assessment questions and spaces for the learners to write as he learns.

Preparing materials that would meet the following standards often times poses as challenges to the writers who may have been accustomed to writing other forms of textbooks and study materials. The challenges notwithstanding, Abenoba and Dahunsi, (2014) reveal that the success of any ODL institution depends on the availability of learning materials in quality and quantity. Course materials for open distance learners need to be written in such a way that they are self – explanatory, easy to read and understand, the materials should be learner – friendly and must have evaluative questions that would enable the learner assess his reading and study as he uses the material. Challenges facing the writers of course materials for open distance education may include but are not limited to inadequate time allocated for the submission, unavailability of materials to consult by the course writer, lack of internet connectivity or where available it may be erratic, erratic

power supply, writers not being conversant with the mode of preparing course materials for open distance learning, materials not conforming to the instructional and language norms that must be adhered to and many more.

Distance Learning Institute University of Lagos has been in existence since the inception of the University itself. It has metamorphosed from a correspondence type of institution to full open distance learning institute to meet up the regulations of the National Universities Commission's (NUC) guideline on Open Distance Education in Nigeria. And to be accredited as an open distance education institute, the need to prepare and make available courseware both in print and electronic form becomes paramount. The very nature of open distance education makes it imperative that the materials that will be given to learners are to be written in a very simple, straight forward and interactive mode that will enable the learners to fully utilize the materials independently.

Statement of Problem

Open distance learning is the type of learning in which a learner is expected to embark on his learning mostly on individual basis without necessarily being in a classroom or in a group. To achieve successful learning, an open distance learner requires to have interactive course materials that will aid his studying in order to achieve the desired success in his academic endeavours. Despite the place and importance of courseware in open distance learning, most of the times learners are faced with non-availability or shortage of course materials to study with. The problem may be attributed to inability of the lecturers to write and produce these materials, it may also be administrative bureaucracy. What is the lecturers' perception of the challenges of producing course materials for DLI learners? How can such challenges be surmounted? What are the challenges faced by the facilitators and lecturers in the course of writing the course materials? Are the materials in tandem with the guidelines for preparing courseware for open distance learners? These and many more are the questions that the present research seeks to address.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse Lecturers' Perception of the challenges of developing courseware in the Distance Learning Institute.

Other specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the challenges faced by lecturers in preparing course materials in DLI
2. Find out whether the lecturers' perception differ according to gender
3. Determine if lecturers' perception of the challenges differ according to years of experience as lecturers.

Research Questions:

To be able to elicit lecturers' perceptions, three research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the challenges of developing course ware/materials for ODL students?
2. Does lecturer's perception differ according to Gender?
3. Does lecturer's perception differ according to years of Experience?

Research Hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on gender.-
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on years of experience.

Methods

The survey design was adopted for the study. This enabled the researchers to collect data through the use of self-structured questionnaire from the sample of the study. The population of the study comprised of 350 full-time and adjunct lecturers of the Distance Learning Institute, University of Lagos. From the population a sample of 126 lecturers were selected as the sample for the study. A 33-item, self-structured 4-point Likert scale questionnaire titled Challenges for preparing courseware materials in Open Distance Education (CPCMODE) was used to elicit information from the sample. The questionnaire was validated by 2 experts in Mathematics and Educational Psychology in the University of Lagos. Their contributions helped in correcting the items on the questionnaire to suit the study. The internal consistence of the questionnaire was done by using Cronbach Alpha method and this yielded consistency index of 0.73, this was taken to be high enough to use the questionnaire for the study. A total of 126 copies of the questionnaire was administered however, only 98 were dully filled and returned and the analysis for the study was based on the returned copies of the questionnaires.

Results

Below is a quantitative analysis and interpretation of data collected in the course of the study. The data were generated using the questionnaire. Out of 126 copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents, 98 of the questionnaires were properly filled and were returned. The data collected on respondents' biodata and research questions were analysed using percentage and mean average statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square method

Table 1

Data Presentation and Analysis according to the Demographic profile of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent t	Cumulative Percentage
Female	42	42.9	42.9

Male	56	57.1	100
Total	98	100	
Years of Experience			
Less than 10 years	58	59.2	59.2
Between 11-19 years	27	27.6	86.8
20Years and above	13	13.3	100.1
Total	98	100.1	

Highest Academic Qualification

M.Sc	68	69.4	69.4
Ph.D	30	30.6	100
TOTAL	98	100	

Source: Field Survey June, 2015.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges of developing course ware/materials for ODL students?**Table 2****Responses of the respondents on the Challenges of developing courseware materials.**

S/ N	ITEMS	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	T ot al	Me an	Re ma rk
1	The time given for course material development is too short hence low quality in the materials.	10 (10.2)	62 (63.2)	26 (26.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	98	3.8 2	Agree
2	There is little or no commitment to the course material development process because it does not contribute to the career development of academics	0 (0)	0 (0)	35 (35)	23 (23)	40 (40)	98	3.8 6	disagree

S/ N	ITEMS	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %	T otal	Me an	Re ma rk
3	<i>Insufficient motivation given to course writers leads to low output</i>	29 (29)	42 (42)	0 (0)	15 (15)	14 (14)	98	3.5 7	Agree
4	<i>Most of the external writers not technically trained in ODL procedures have difficulty putting materials together in line with ODL.</i>	23 (23)	40 (40)	37 (37)	0 (0)	0 (0)	98	3.8 6	Agree
5	<i>There are fewer subject experts that are willing to write the course materials</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	86 (86)	12 (0)	98	4.8 6	Disagree
6	<i>There are processes in place for quality assurance of course materials.</i>	10 (10)	62 (62)	28 (28)	0 (0)	0 (0)	98	3.8 2	Agree
7	<i>Hands-on information technology workshops for academic staff on how to assess and use open educational resources (OER) are available</i>	29 (29)	42 (42)	0 (0)	15 (15)	14 (14)	98	3.5 7	Agree
8	<i>There are facilities in place for easy communication between the facilitators and course writers.</i>	26 (26)	15 (15)	36 (36)	23 (23)	0 (0)	98	3.4 4	Agree

Table 2 shows the analysis of the research question one. The challenges of developing course ware/materials for ODL students are as follows: The time given for course material development is too short hence low quality in the materials, Insufficient motivation given to course writers leads to low output, Most of the

external writers not technically trained in ODL procedures have difficulty putting materials together in line with ODL. There are processes in place for quality assurance of course materials, Hands-on information technology workshops for academic staff on how to assess and use open educational resources (OER) are available and there are facilities in place for easy communication between the facilitators and course writers.

Test of Hypotheses

In order to arrive at reliable findings and conclusion from the analysed data, the proposed hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on gender.

H_1 : There is no significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on gender.

Decision Rule

Table 3

Chi-square Analysis of the Perception of the Challenges based on gender.

	Value	Df	Asymp. sided)	Sig. (2-
Pearson Chi-Square	91.289 ^a	16	.000	
Likelihood Ratio	84.912	16	.000	
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.813	1	.002	
N of Valid Cases	100			

a. 19 cells (76.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .63.

The decision rule for Chi-square method is to reject H_0 (null hypotheses) if the calculated value of X^2 is greater than the table value and accept H_1 (alternative hypotheses). On the other hand, reject H_1 if the table value is greater than calculated value X^2 and accept H_0 .

Result: From the Chi-square analysis of research hypothesis one, it was discovered that the chi-square calculated value of 91.289 is greater than chi-square tabulated value of 26.30 at 0.05 level of significance with 16 degree of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis that there is significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on gender is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on years of Experience.

H₁: There is significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on years of Experience.

Table 4

Perception of the Challenges based on years of Experience Chi-Square Tests of the perception of the challenges based on years of Experience.

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.191 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	59.920	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.856	1	.355
N of Valid Cases	98		

a. 15 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

Decision Rule

The decision rule for Chi-square method is to reject H_0 (null hypotheses) if the calculated value of χ^2 is greater than the table value and accept H_1 (alternative hypotheses). On the other hand, reject H_1 if the table value is greater than calculated value χ^2 and accept H_0 .

Result: From the Chi-square analysis of research hypothesis two, it was discovered that the chi-square calculated value of 56.191 is greater than chi-square tabulated value of 26.30 at 0.05 level of significance with 16 degree of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis that there is significant difference in the perception of the challenges based on years of Experience, H_1 is accepted.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there are many challenges that lecturers are facing in writing course materials for open distance learning, these challenges include shortness of time allotted for the writing, insufficient motivation for the writers and no technical training in open distance learning courseware development for the writers. This corroborates Petroman and Petroman (2013) opinion that planning and writing learning materials for open distance learning is a true challenge no matter the type of institution. The test of hypothesis on revealed significant difference in the perception of the challenges among the based on gender. This shows that male lecturers have different views of the challenges from the female lecturers. The findings from the test of hypothesis one revealed that there is gender difference in the perception of male and female lecturers on the challenges faced by lecturers in the preparation of course materials. This goes in line with a significant body of research that have been conducted to determine whether male and female differ in their perception of social and psychological

phenomena. Markus and Crave (1982) point out that male-female dichotomy is the most fundamental issue in the society and it affects information processing strategies of gender schema. Prakash and Flores (1985) say that gender difference have concerned topics such as andragogy, self-concept, levels of motivation and perception.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study:

- Further trainings should be available for lecturers on course ware writing.
- Adequate motivation should be provided for lecturers to enhance quality production of course materials.
- Course material development process should contribute to the career development of academics to serve as motivation.

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