PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: NEED FOR COUNSELLING INTERVENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The value of open and distance education in Nigeria is undermined by the poor public image of the system across every stratum of the society. This study investigated the public perceptions of distance education in Nigeria with a view to underscoring the need for counselling interventions in order to place distance learning in its proper perspective and in the same pedestal with what is obtainable in other countries of the world. The study employed the descriptive survey research design with a population of 302 respondents randomly selected from students, civil servants and private individuals who engage in one form of business or the other in the North Central, South East, and South West geopolitical zones of Nigeria. A self-structured questionnaire called Perception Profile of Distance Education (PPDE) was structured in Likert format using SA for Strongly Agree, A for Agree, D for Disagree, and SD for Strongly Disagree, which were weighed 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for data collection. The instrument was subjected to Cronbach Alpha analysis. A result of 0.89 was obtained to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The data collected were analysed using the SPSS platform where the research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level using inferential statistics (ANOVA and t-test). The results of the study indicated poor public perceptions of distance education in Nigeria, which renders the certificates obtained in such institutions unacceptable in many establishments for employment and as a prerequisite for higher degrees in some conventional universities. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Nigerians should be well informed about the operations of open and distance education using counselling services to work on their mindsets through cognitive restructuring, information dissemination and value re-orientation.

Keywords: Public perceptions, distance education, counselling.

Introduction

The expectation of every individual engaging in learning activities in a formal setting is to be equipped with sound knowledge capable of improving him/her and the larger society through gainful employment and service to humanity. This knowledge is gained from primary through secondary to tertiary levels of education. Similarly, it is the expectation of people that any institution established to provide formal education should be capable of producing sound and all round experts that can face the challenges of the society. Such an institution must be accepted by people based on its quality assurance mechanism and mode of operation. Distance education was conceived a long time ago to complement conventional institutions in providing education to people to enable them live fulfilled life and contribute meaningfully to the society.

The history of distance education could be traced to the early 1700s inform of correspondence education with the technology-based distance education linked to the introduction of audio-visual devices into schools in the early 1900s (Jeffries, 2009). Katz (2002) posits that distance education started with

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correspondence courses using traditional printed material and communication via post and telephone. This phase was followed by the era of television and taped courses using audio recordings and radio and television broadcasts. He further states that the third phase saw the entry of web-based technology courses, which is currently being practised all over the world using interactive video, e-mail, and World Wide Web technologies that is now teacher-student interactive.

Distance education in Nigeria can be traced to the recommendation of Ashby Commission of 1959, which recommended the establishment of the University of Lagos to run both day and evening courses (Fafunwa, 1974), in which the evening courses metamorphosed into correspondence courses. With the release of the white paper on the report of the commission in 1960, shortly before independence, the University of Lagos was established in 1962 with the take off of Examination Success Correspondence College. However, prior to 1960, many Nigerians were sitting for London and Cambridge General Certificate in Education, Advanced Level (GCE, A Level) for career progression and higher education overseas. Thereafter, several institutions floated correspondence courses for GCE, diplomas, and degrees (Ukwueze, 2013). Many pioneer Nigerian graduates earned their degrees through home study and correspondence education from external studies system of the University of London (Ramon-Yusuf, 2010).

The Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in the late 1960s, introduced distance learning through the Institute of Education to upgrade teachers' qualifications and skills in northern Nigeria (COL, 2001). In 1974, the University of Lagos started the first ever distance learning programme for degree programmes when it established the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (Iyiegbuniwe & Alaneme, 2013). In 1976, the National Teachers' Institute, NTI was established by the Federal Government to officially and solely provide distance education courses to upgrade under-qualified and unqualified teachers recruited for the free and compulsory Universal Primary Education scheme that was introduced the same year (Awe, 2013).

In the 1980s, several institutions established outreach and sandwich programmes that were ran through distance education and mass-media mediated programmes. On July 27, 1983, the Federal Government established the National Open University (NOU) as the only university solely designed to provide distance education to many Nigerians who are desirous of acquiring education and professional skills at tertiary level. However, on April 25, 1984 the NOU was suspended but resuscitated on March 27, 2002 as the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Today, some federal universities have been allowed by law to run dual mode system of distance education. These universities are the Universities of Abuja, Ibadan, Jos, Lagos, and Maiduguri. Others are the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto. The open and distance education courses and programmes are targeted at the adult population but it is now being used for school-age children and youth (Tahir, 2016).

The stand of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) is that programmes offered in distance education institutions are equivalent in structure and status to those offered by face-to-face mode of delivery in the appropriate tertiary educational institutions; and encourage and regulate open and distance education practice in the country. To this end, the National Universities Commission (NUC) ensures that all the courses run by the National Open University of Nigeria and other conventional institutions using dual mode of practice are accredited in order to ensure quality and uniformity of standard. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Education through relevant agencies ensures that the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) is providing accredited and standard courses in their quest to upgrade teachers through distance learning.

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Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the theory of perception by Swami Krishnananda, an Indian philosopher, which was postulated in 1992. The theory states that perception is a process of the consciousness of an object, which exists outside man's body and senses but in his mind. The object itself does not enter the eye in the act of seeing but there is a transmission of vibration from the object, with which his consciousness comes in contact, which becomes a content of his consciousness, and on account of which he is said to know the existence of the external object (Krishnananda, 1992). The theory maintains that perception is caused by the operation of a mind whose existence is evident from the fact of the synthesis of sensation and of the possibility of the absence of perception at certain times. It further states that the mind is a radical entity, which goes out from the eye or any other sense-organ to the place where an object is, and gets transformed into the shape of that object through auditory, tactile, visual, gustatory, and olfactory centres of the brain and the astral body.

In the process of perceiving objects the way they are, the ego of an individual comes to fore and may arrogate to itself, the function of the mind thereby resulting to impersonal perception of the mind into a personal knowledge. This makes it possible for people to differ in their perceptions of a particular object. Hence, it may not be the way that *Mr. A* perceives a particular object that *Mr. B* would perceive it, though they may come to terms in certain aspects of that object. This is why it is necessary to investigate how some Nigerians perceive open and distance education as a means of achieving mass literacy and professional skills in the country, bearing in mind that there could be individual differences and differing opinions on an issue like this. Thus, this theoretical perspective is highly suitable for this study.

Literature Review

In the past, most studies conducted comparing conventional and distance education approaches assumed that the quality of the educational experience and the quality of the graduates produced are the same (UNESCO, 2002). Perhaps, this was responsible for the springing up of distance education institutions in the world, especially in highly populated countries in Asia and Africa. Peters (1998) states that distance education is not a natural but an artificial way of interaction, which cannot take place without technical media, thereby, making it a difficult approach of pedagogical endeavour, and severing a break of academic tradition. By implication therefore, distance education is perceived as a negation of traditional means of educating people.

Hochberg (2006) opines that there is a mixed image of distance education programmes as there are people who speak in its favour while some others express concerns that it lowers learning standards. Another problem is that it is deemed by some scholars as inappropriate for many courses (DeLoughry, 1995). Evans and Haase (2001) on the other hand, see no difference in achievement in well-designed distance education programmes and on-campus courses in terms of standard measures.

Thus, the popularity accorded distance education and the controversies surrounding it all over the world in the last few years has attracted several studies in several areas of virtual learning, especially the perceptions of the general public on technology-oriented education. Seyoum (2008) posits that different people perceive the advantages of open and distance learning differently and their perceptions have influenced attitudes towards the acceptance and use of open and distance learning system in many countries. He stressed that out of the various problems facing distance education today is even how it is

perceived by the individuals involved in it. This may include students, staff and other stakeholders. According to Williams (2012), 59% of students who undergo online courses do not feel that distance learning provides equal value with traditional platform. Consequently, students dislike distance learning and feel jealous of traditional in-class students because of their connection and interaction with the instructors (Beare, 1989). However, Hannay and Newvine (2006) observed students' positive perceptions about distance learning since the programmes provide off-campus and access to higher education for students who cannot attend traditional courses due to employment, marital status, family responsibilities, distance, and expenses incurred with traditional education. As a result, Williams (2012) suggests that institutions must engage in marketing to reinvent the public's perception of the value of online courses in comparison to face-to-face institutions.

Parker, Lenhart and Moore (2011) reported that a study by Pew Research Centre study revealed a strong sense of skepticism whether online courses provide an educational value equal to face-to-face, with only 29% believing that they were equal and that digital natives under age 30 are more skeptical than older adults. They argue that negative perceptions about distance education are due to lack of face-to-face interaction between students and instructors; students' honesty and assessment as well as evaluation of courses; and widespread access to computer technology, which is instrumental in the increase of plagiarism and cheating.

In Nigeria, several distance education students have positive perceptions and attitudes towards open and distance learning (Ojo & Olakulehin, 2006) while many people who are outside the system are skeptical about the quality of evaluation and mode of service delivery in distance education (Awe, 2013). Olojede (2008) states that the graduates of open and distance education programmes are perceived as inferior to those produced in the conventional system. Similarly, Iyiegbuniwe and Alaneme (2013) observed that students in particular have mixed feelings about the inadequate coverage of the syllabus in distance learning. Ojo in Awe (2013) asserts that many Nigerians criticize distance education because of high rate of malpractices in home work, assignments, tests and examinations, which invariably lower the quality of education in the system. Salawu (2016) concludes that many people still have wrong impression about open and distance learning in Nigeria, stressing that despite the popularity of the system, it is still facing credibility problems.

Statement of the Problem

It is unfortunate to observe from the literature reviewed above that while people all over the world have embraced the concept of open and distance education, many Nigerians are still skeptical about its efficacy in this 21st century, an era of education for all. Also, it is sad to observe that people that benefited from distance learning system in the past are the people opposing it now. Nigerian adults that the system was primarily introduced for have left it for the school age children who are not capable of gaining entry into conventional universities and other tertiary institutions. In addition, graduates of distance learning find it difficult to pursue their postgraduate studies in conventional universities because of their lukewarm attitude towards certificates obtained from distance education institutions. For instance, graduates of law programmes in the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) are still finding it difficult to be accepted by the Legal Education Council to enable them go to Law School in order to be called to bar and practice as lawyers. Similarly, several parents prefer their children and wards attending conventional institutions to

studying in distance education institutions. Certificates obtained from distance education institutions are often seen as inferior certificates thereby making it difficult for graduates with such certificates to secure gainful employment. Hence, there seems to be general public apathy about distance education in Nigeria, which deserves to be investigated in order to ascertain the level and extent of the apathy among various strata of the nation's society.

There is no doubt that distance education is a major means of providing education to a large number of people at reasonable cost. Many highly populated countries in Africa stand a good chance of benefitting immensely from the gains of open and distance education as a means of reaching several people in order to achieve education for all at a reasonable duration of time. Perhaps, many Nigerians are not aware of these facts, hence, their poor perceptions or negative attitude towards distance education in this era of spirited pursuit of education in the world to achieve individual and national development holistically. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the public perceptions about distance education in Nigeria with a view to suggesting counselling interventions for a change of attitude among those who are still doubtful about the potentials of distance education, especially in a developing economy. While people in other countries are seeking for ways of improving on the quality of distance learning, Nigerians are still battling with the acceptability of the approach as a means of providing education for the citizenry.

It is expected that the results of the study will provide adequate information that will enable government and the relevant agencies in distance education enrich the system in order to change the perceptions of critics of distance education in Nigeria. Furthermore, prospective students who are being discouraged by the critics of distance education would be better informed in order to enroll and achieve their life goals. Similarly, students who are already in the system would be rest assured about the relevance of their chosen mode of study. Finally, the intervention of counselling psychology will no doubt provide a means of changing the mindsets of the general public towards distance education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:
1. What is the perception of people about the quality of education in open and distance education in Nigeria?
2. What are the negative feelings about open and distance education in Nigeria?
3. What are the positive feelings about open and distance education in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level to further guide the study:
1. Qualifications have no significant influence on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria.
2. Occupation has no significant influence on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria.
3. Gender has no significant influence on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed the simple descriptive survey research design using literate Nigerians drawn from three out of the six geopolitical zones of the country. The areas covered are the North Central, South

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East, and South West geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The towns used are Lagos (South West), Enugu (South East), and Abuja and Kaduna (North Central). Through stratified random sampling, a total of 95 and 101 respondents respectively were selected from the South East and the South West zones while 106 were selected from the North Central zone, making a total of 302 literate Nigerians sampled and used for the study.

Instrumentation

A self-structured questionnaire called Perception Profile of Distance Education (PPDE) was structured in Likert format using SA for Strongly Agree, A for Agree, D for Disagree, and SD for Strongly Disagree, which were weighed 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for data collection. Through face validity, the instrument was validated by an expert in guidance and counselling. Out of 24 items proposed in the draft copy of the instrument, fifteen of them were used for final construction after careful and painstaking scrutiny by the expert. Below the instrument was an open-ended question on the general impression of distance education in Nigeria. The final version of the instrument was subjected to Cronbach alpha analysis using 20 people working in tertiary institutions who were not part of the study. A result of 0.89 was obtained to ascertain the reliability of the instrument.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were given to the staff of the National Open University of Nigeria resident in the four locations/towns used for the study to administer among literate residents in the areas. Out of 320 copies of the questionnaire given out, a total of 302 copies were returned and used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using the SPSS platform. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level using inferential statistics (t-test and ANOVA). For the interpretation of the results in Tables 1, a mean of 2.5 and above is an indication that an item was accepted while a mean score of less than 2.5 is an indication that an item was rejected by the respondents.

Results

The results of the study are as presented in Tables 1-6 below.

Table 1: Perceptions of people about quality of education in open and distance education

Perceptions	Mean	Std. Dev.
Students in distance education are not properly trained.	2.590	.907
Most students in distance education institutions are not qualified for conventional institutions.	2.364	.943*
Certificates from distance education institutions are not qualitative enough.	2.651	.853
Quality of assessment in distance education is substandard.	2.464	.902*
Mode of lecture delivery in distance education is poor.	2.596	.902
Students in distance education are at par with those in conventional universities.	2.229	.927*

Students in distance education do not interact with themselves and their lecturers for solutions to problems.	2.692	.840
Graduates of distance education usually face discrimination during employment.	2.629	.860
Distance education is for people who failed to gain admission into conventional universities.	2.487	.892*
Quality of education in distance education is very poor.	2.507	.907
Distance education institutions do not have facilities to provide quality education.	2.699	.785
Quality assurance mechanism in distance education is very poor.	2.623	.821
Distance education lacks the aura of tertiary education.	2.646	.857
I will find it difficult to employ graduates of distance education in my organization.	2.596	.829
Graduates of distance education do not have the required knowledge to carry out organizational tasks.	2.662	.911

Std. Dev. = Standard Deviation; * Not Accepted.

The data in Table 1 indicate that several Nigerians doubt the efficacy of open and distance education as a means of providing quality education to people. Specifically, students of distance education do not receive proper training (M = 2.590; SD = .907); and the quality of certificates awarded to students is poor (M = 2.651; SD = .853). Also, the mode of lecture delivery in distance education was accepted as one of the ills of the system (Mean = 2.596; SD = .902) while students do not even interact with themselves and their lecturers for solutions to problems (Mean = 2.692; SD = .840); and graduates of distance education usually face discrimination in employment (Mean = 2.629; SD = .860). The table also shows that the quality of education is generally poor (Mean = 2.507; SD = .907); facilities are not enough to provide quality education (Mean = 2.699; SD = .785); and quality assurance mechanism is equally poor (Mean = 2.623; SD = .821). Similarly, the respondents opined that distance education lacks the aura of tertiary education (Mean = 2.646; SD = .857); and graduates of distance education do not have the required knowledge and skills to carry out organizational tasks (Mean = 2.662; SD = .911).

Table 2: Negative Comments of Respondents about Distance Education in Nigeria

- Nigeria is not yet ripe for distance education due to poor infrastructure and bad living conditions in the society.
- It encourages corruption as students buy results to pass.
- There is absolute lack of lecturer supervision.
- The system is only good for the working class at the exclusion of many youths that are yearning for education.
- It does not provide students with practical experience and skills.
- ODL is capital intensive and cannot be afforded by many Nigerians who are living below poverty level.
- It is only suitable for people who obtained their first degree elsewhere.
- The certificates are not universally accepted for employment and further studies.

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- There are dubious means of service delivery with questionable and unreliable assessment modes.
- Entry point is too weak and flexible.
- It lacks the aura of tertiary education due to absence of student-student interaction and face-to-face facilitation.
- Students are on their own when it comes to assignment, registration of courses, facilitation, and sourcing for reading materials.
- The system is bedeviled with poor quality education and needs overhauling before it can be accepted to be at par with other modes of providing education to people.

The information in Table 2 is an extract from some striking comments made by the respondents when asked to comment on their general impression about distance education in Nigeria. These negative comments were collated from a cross section of the country, the civil servants, students and private individuals in the country.

Table 3: Positive Comments of Respondents about Distance Education in Nigeria

- Distance education is an alternative means of acquiring education, which brings conscientious responsibility to people.
- It is a comprehensive and impressive means of education for workers to improve themselves.
- The system enhances flexible access to education and academic freedom among students and staff.
- It gives confidence to students as independent persons in the society.
- Distance education boosts socio-economic morale of individuals in the society.

Similarly, the information in Table 3 is an extract from some striking comments made by the respondents about distance education in Nigeria. These comments were collated from the civil servants, students and private individuals in the country who were sampled for the study.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA Analysis of the Effect of Qualification on the Ratings of Respondents about Distance Education

Descriptive				
Qualification	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Below Degree	63	36.6349	7.14662	.90039
Degree	163	39.0613	7.14808	.55988
Higher Degree	76	38.4211	7.77391	.89173
Total	302	38.3940	7.34623	.42273

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	267.593	2	133.797	2.504	.083

Within Groups	15976.516	299	53.433		
Total	16244.109	301			

As observed from the data in Table 4, the P-value (.083) is greater than .05 level. Thus, the hypothesis of no significant influence of qualifications on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria is hereby accepted. This shows that the type of occupation engaged by the respondents did not significantly influence their perceptions on open and distance education in Nigeria.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA Analysis of the Effect of Occupation on the Ratings of Respondents about Distance Education

Descriptive				
Occupation	**Number**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Standard Error**
Civil Service	156	38.5577	8.08921	.64766
Business	96	39.1458	6.74339	.68824
Students	50	36.4400	5.59212	.79085
Total	302	38.3940	7.34623	.42273

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	249.350	2	124.675	2.331	.099
Within Groups	15994.759	299	53.494		
Total	16244.109	301			

The data in Table 5 show that P (.099), as obtained is marginally above .05 level. Hence, the hypothesis of no significant influence of occupation on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria is hereby accepted. This is an indication that the type of occupation engaged by the respondents did not significantly influence their perceptions on open and distance education in Nigeria.

Table 6: T-Test Analysis of the Influence of Gender on the Perceptions of People on Distance Education

Gender	Number	Mean	SD	df	t	F	Sig
Male	158	38.1646	7.13461	300	.568	.166	.570
Female	144	38.6458	7.58861				

The data in Table 6 indicate no significant difference between the ratings of male and female respondents on their perceptions on open and distance education in Nigeria as P (.570) is above .05 level. By implication therefore, the hypothesis of no significant influence of gender on the perceptions of people about distance education in Nigeria is hereby accepted.

Discussion

For any new innovation to achieve its desired objectives there must be some elements of bias or skepticism from the general public. In Nigeria, distance education is an innovation that is relatively new,

which aims at achieving accessible education using a flexible platform to the vast majority of Nigerians. As a result, critics see distance education as a weak means of providing quality education. The findings of this study indicate that people are of the view that Nigeria is not yet ripe for distance education as it does not provide enough training for students compared to what is obtainable in the conventional system. Specifically, the study found that certificates issued to students are not qualitative enough to compete with students of other institutions; mode of lecture delivery is poor; there is discrimination in the labour market against graduates of distance education institutions due to poor quality of education and service delivery; there is little or no interactions in distance education; and available facilities are grossly inadequate to provide quality service and quality education. The study also found that quality assurance mechanism for quality education is lacking; and that graduates of distance education do not have the required practical skills and knowledge to compete in the labour market and carry out organizational tasks if employed. Further criticisms as discovered in this study are that distance education encourages corruption and cheap results. It is capital intensive and only suitable for working class citizens who must have obtained their first degrees from conventional institutions. Also, lecturer supervision is lacking thereby making the system to be deficient in providing the aura of tertiary education to people. In addition, the entry point is highly flexible and too weak to attract best brains as students. These discoveries are in line with the position of Hochberg (2006) who states that some people express concerns that distance education lowers learning standards. The findings also corroborate the observations of Awe (2013) and Iyiegbuniwe and Alaneme (2013) that many Nigerians are skeptical about distance education because the quality of education and mode of service delivery in the system make the products inferior to their counterparts from conventional institutions. The high rate of cheating during assessment as asserted by Ojo in Awe (2013) is also an affirmation of the findings of this study.

However, the findings of this study also discovered that some Nigerians have faith in open and distance education as an alternative, democratic, impressive and comprehensive means of providing education to the vast population of Nigeria who must have missed out during their early years. The system provides workers the opportunity to further their studies for career progression and self-development. These findings are tangential to the assertion of the UNESCO (2002) that studies conducted in the past showed that the quality of educational experience and the quality of graduates produced in both distance education and conventional institutions are the same. Finally, the study discovered that qualification, occupation and gender do not influence public perceptions about distance education in Nigeria. This could be attributed to the unity of purpose, intellectual sagacity and cooperation of Nigerians on issues that affect people collectively.

Need for Counselling Interventions

Counselling is broadly a mutual exploration, explanation, interpretation, description and exchange of ideas, attitudes and feelings between a counsellor and a counsellee using a variety of techniques to help the latter in solving his or her problems. The findings of this study have significant implications for counselling in Nigeria, especially as it affects open and distance education and the wider society.

In the first place, students of distance education need to be reassured that the quality of education available in open and distance education institutions is at par with what is obtainable in conventional institutions. Counsellors in this regard need to engage students in individualized and group counselling

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services using intervention strategies like explanation to simplify certain issues to students. Students should also be engaged with using cognitive restructuring where direct teaching is applied in confronting their irrational thoughts or perceptions about open and distance education. Another intervention strategy is through support services using information dissemination and assistance in decision making. These services require unconditional rapport where an interactive process of mutual feeling and understanding is established during counselling sessions (Ukwueze, 2015).

The general public equally deserves counselling intervention to disabuse their negative feelings and uphold positive feelings about open and distance education in Nigeria. Every facet of the society requires counselling through outreach intervention for the vulnerable using community counselling to provide necessary information that can change the mindset of people about distance education. Rehabilitation counselling could also be used for the psychologically or traumatically abused citizens. To achieve this requires value-reorientation where the values of Nigerians are revisited and re-oriented towards positive living using appropriate information and legislation. It is expected that such information will broaden the mind of people who are skeptical about the quality of education in distance learning institutions in Nigeria. They need to be informed that flexible access to education does not mean compromising standards but a means of achieving quality education for all in the society at affordable cost.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Open and distance education came into being as a means of providing flexible and cost effective quality education to large people in various parts of Nigeria without compromising standards. Such people might be those who did not have the opportunity to be educated when they were young; people that are working but wish to upgrade themselves; the youths who cannot afford the cost of conventional education; and the vulnerable in prisons, rehabilitation centres, and the internally displaced persons yearning for education but lack access to it. Many Nigerians feel that distance education is not an alternative to conventional education, arguing that the quality of education provided by distance education institutions is far less that what is obtainable in face-to-face institutions. They are of the opinion that Nigeria lacks the facilities and integrity to run distance education. It is further argued that Nigeria is not yet ripe for distance education as it is capital intensive, lacks regulation and supervision, and it encourages academic fraud through buying of results. Besides, the system does not provide enough practical skills and knowledge for students to function well in the society after graduation.

However, distance education is a wonderful alternative of providing mass education to many Nigerians. The issue of acceptability is something that should not disturb any person since other countries that started it long time ago are bountifully reaping its benefits. In view of this, it is recommended in this study that:

- Nigerians should be well informed about the tenets and benefits of distance education as a global means of providing education to a large number of people through counselling services like individual counselling, community counselling, outreach counselling and group counselling using advertorials, information dissemination, public lecture, value-reorientation, cognitive restructuring, and modelling techniques.

- Distance education institutions should endeavour to provide enough opportunities for student-student interactions, student-lecturer interactions, facilitation of courses, and practical experience in the laboratories for relevant courses and programmes.
- Government at all levels should come to the aid of distance education via appropriate legislation for regulation and standardization, and provision of infrastructural facilities like physical structures or buildings, computers, Internet facilities, and electricity.

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