

# ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IN THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY TEACHERS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*Open and Distance Education is an effective way of educating people of all categories and professions in the society as the delivery system is quite different from conventional on-campus teaching. It is also a substitute for the conventional classroom teaching as it involves different types of media which include printed materials, like text books, newspapers, radio, cassette, television, computer-based communication, and telephone among others. In this age of information super-highway, it is impossible to challenge the possibility that effective and quality education can be offered through adequate design and usage of instructional materials for the production of quality teachers. In recent times improving teachers' quality has assumed a central strategy for improving a nation's ability to compete in the global knowledge, economy, ensuring the quality of the workforce, and meeting rising social expectation related to diversity and equality (Teachers College Record, 2012). It is in this context that this paper, using the existing literatures as bases, examines and discusses the role of instructional strategies that could be implemented in the development of instructional materials for teaching and learning in open and distance education for the production of quality teachers.*

## **Introduction**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education (NPE) and UNESCO (2003) conceptualized open and distance education as a means for the removal of barriers to education and access to learning opportunities that is flexible in nature. The Federal Ministry of Education (2002) defined open and distance education as any form of learning in which the provider enables individual learners to exercise choice of one or more aspects of learning, while distance education is defined as educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner. It involves presentation of information to participants using a range of media, such as print, written correspondence; audio, video, and computer based media and networks as well as multimedia facilities.

In the same vein, Sultana (n.d.) defined distance education as a system and process of connecting learners with distributed learning resources whereby students in distance education system communicate with the teachers and other fellow students through several media. Also,

the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) (1990) subscribed to the concept of distance education as a method in which the teacher and learner meet face-to-face occasionally and in which the greater part of teaching is in printed materials or the electronic media (radio, television, telephone etc.). Dhanarajan, (2000) affirmed that distance education describes a set of learning strategies that can be used to overcome spatial and temporal separation between educators and learners. The foregoing presupposes that the prospective personnel that will use these identified instructional materials must be well-trained in the use of them.

Open and distance system of education is not as old as conventional on-campus education system. Open and distance education came into practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Grattan (1959) documented the establishment of university extension in the United States from 1850-1901 by the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching. The aim was to bring education to the reach of those who were not opportune to attend the conventional institution of learning. Accordingly, Grattan (1959) said that:

The University Extension is meant to serve those for whom religion, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is intended. It is meant to help the ignorant who desires knowledge that they may learn wisely, to expose the half-educated to the insufficiency of their knowledge, to arouse intellectual sluggards, to stimulate those who are in the right way, and to bring questioning to the hearts of the self-satisfied. P12

Consequently, a number of improvements have been made in the last two centuries and still on-going. Among the significant improvements made in the last few decades is the development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Today, information and communication technology systems (ICT) have assumed a greater role in the instructional methodologies and the delivery system in open and distance education than that of on-campus teaching. This is based on the fact that distance education is thought to be an effective way of educating all sections of society. It is considered a close substitute for the conventional on-campus teaching keeping in mind the premises that different types of media (radio, print, video, telephone, computer based communication system, etc.) are synchronized in the delivery process in distance education and open learning system. In this age of information super-highway, it would be difficult for any instructor who is neither well-trained nor obtained vast knowledge nor skills on handling high-tech instructional materials to undertake meaningful instruction at any level of education and system and especially in distance education.

Over some decades now questions about teacher quality, including how teachers ought to be educated and certified has been one of the top most discussed educational agenda in developed countries and elsewhere, specifically in the United States as controversies on what teacher quality means has attracted conflicting claims about the empirical evidence and public skepticism about the need for formal teacher preparation (Teachers College Record, 2012). In some quarters there is the belief in the universal maxim that quality or good teachers are born and not made. This position is further strengthened by lack of conclusive empirical research on the outcomes of preparation programs in the areas of educating and certifying teachers as evidence of competency and professionalism. However, to other education scientists, the improvement of teachers' quality has assumed a central strategy for improving a nation's ability to compete in the global knowledge economy, ensuring the quality of the workforce, and meeting

rising social expectation related to diversity and equality. They emphatically endorsed developing quality teachers that would influence nations' ability to meet rising challenges. These challenges has provoked the declaration of UNESCO (1998) that "The world needs better teachers and more leaders" to confront the poor quality of teachers in distance learning. Furthermore, as at 2001, there were more than 100 million children out of school globally, and if the target for Education for All is going to be met by 2015, there is urgent need to raise the skills of the sixty million teachers. To this effect, the role of instructional materials in open and distance education is seen as the power engine in the production of quality teachers. Teachers are the iron pin of education success in any form and at any level (UNESCO, 2001).

### **Historical and Development of Distance Education**

Okebukola and Shabani, (2001) classified the history and the development of distance education into three different generations: the first generation had the medium of written and printed materials which had been in use for centuries, the introduction of new printing technique which enabled the low cost production of text books in the middle of nineteenth century, and the development of railway systems and national postal services for distribution of teaching materials to large population of geographically disposed learners. Also, in addition were the availability of specially developed and limited instructional materials that included a reading list and sample questions by correspondence tutors. The invention of radio in the 1920s as observed by Okebukola and Shabani (2001) witnessed the beginning courses consisting of a series of talks and which occasionally included a set of books or other printed materials and local study groups. The 1950s witnessed a television led courses already established and extensively used coupled with prints and local groups, including occasional student assessment.

The second generation took off with the establishment of Open University in the United Kingdom in 1969. This was said to be the first deliberately integrated multiple media approach that had been used for distance education, and as a result, a large and high-quality integrated media and instructional materials were specially designed. These high quality integrated media and instructional materials involved one way communication (from university to students); two-way communication between tutors and students, including correspondence tutoring, face to face tutorials and short residential schools.

The third generation of distance education saw the advent of information and communication technology usage as basis for distance education, and also offering two-way communication in various forms (texts, graphics, sounds, movies in either synchronous or asynchronous), which to a greater extent facilitate interactivity between students and tutors, and also between students and learning resources of various kinds.

In Africa, the development of distance education and use of instructional materials and associated technological application are not new. Saints (2001) attested that the University of South Africa, with an estimated enrollment of 117,000, started as a correspondence University in 1946. Today, it is ranked to be one of the world largest open distance education universities. In Nigeria, distance education started with correspondence colleges based in London. Rapid Result College, Wesley Hall, and Bennett College were the main popular correspondence colleges in 1950s and 1960s in Nigeria. It was not until 1974 that the University of Lagos in collaboration

with the International Extension College in the United Kingdom established the Correspondence and Open Studies University (COSU), which was later labeled as Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT). This was the first attempt to establish distance education in Nigeria (Fagbamiye, 2000).

The NTI became the second to establish distance education program in 1976 by undertaking the training of Grade II teachers (TC II). By 1990, the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) was introduced and added to TC II programs. However, the idea of Open University System for Nigeria was only reflected in the 1977 National Policy on Education with a declaration that: “maximum efforts would be made to enable those who could benefit from higher education to be given access to it. Such access may be through universities or correspondence courses or open universities or part-time and work study programs” (Federal Ministry of Education, 2002). By 1983, this idea was concretized with the establishment of the first Open University in Nigeria, with the aim of becoming the fountain-head as well as the springboard of modern-day open and distance education in Nigeria. In furtherance of this objective, many universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education have developed programs which fall within the definition of distance education in addition to the conventional or face-to-face teaching (Mohammed, 2000). These other universities that have distance education as additional to their traditional system made use of radio, television, print media, and audiocassettes for easy reach and efficient dissemination of information to their mass of students. Currently, most of the Federal Universities are now linked electronically to Nigerian Universities network (NUNET). It is on record that only the National Teachers’ Institute based in Kaduna that provides single mode of distance education programs in Nigeria (National Teacher Institute, 1990).

The development of distance education in Africa in general, and in Nigeria specifically, could be said to have been encouraged and facilitated through the development and utilization of relevant instructional materials for adequate and qualitative teaching of distant learners who either by the nature of their jobs or other disadvantages would not have access to education. To this effect, it could be affirmed that open and distance education owes its existence to the positive role instructional materials (print or electronic) play in teaching and learning processes. The role of instructional materials is considered to be of particular importance in open and distance education because of the differences that exist between the teaching in conventional face-to face settings and teaching at a distance. Bates (n.d.) observed that:

In conventional face-to-face settings, teachers have the ability to decide which methods and media to use; and vary the methods and strategies depending upon the learners’ needs. Whereas, in open and distance education, preplanning is very essential. In open and distance education, ‘how to teach’ becomes crucial to the success of the entire system; learning materials are prepared in advance; media to support those materials are pre-selected; and changes to materials cannot be conveniently incorporated mid-session.

(Topic 4. 4.2.1 & 4.2.2)

Producing quality and effective teachers in open and distance education would therefore requires a sound knowledge of instructional design, characteristics of instructional materials, and criteria for selection of instructional materials as it is believed that: “sound instructional design is good

teaching". Therefore, it is pertinent that in order to produce quality teachers in open and distance education, well-designed instructional materials should be used in teaching and learning in distance education programs if desired result is to be achieved. Gbadamosi, Ajasa & Fawole (2010) lamented the lack of systematic attention to update regularly the knowledge and skills of teachers in the use of relevant and up-to-date instructional materials. Gbadamosi et al (2010) further observed that training and retraining of teachers will enhance their performance and help them cope with educating ever increasing Nigerian masses. Hence, training of teachers in the improvisation and use of relevant instructional materials is imperative for successful running of distance education programs.

### **Characteristics and Criteria for Selection of Good Instructional Materials**

There are preliminary considerations and guidelines to follow in the selection of instructional materials in open and distance education teaching and learning processes. At the heart of educational process lies the quality of teaching and learning activity that goes on. In conventional face-to-face instruction this is facilitated by the presence of the teacher, students, peers on-site and the feasibility of classroom-based interaction. Oakshott (1967) refers to the act of teaching as the deliberate and intentional initiation of learners into the world of human achievement, and learning as the result of communication from the teacher. By this, teaching is viewed as a reciprocal act that is impossible in the absence of learners. In the conventional education system, this reciprocity is obviously possible and evident, because if students are not present in classrooms then teaching cannot take place. However, in distance education, this kind of interface between students and teachers and among students does not take place naturally. Therefore, the above assertion by Oakshott negates the principles and characteristics of developing instructional materials in open and distance education for producing quality teachers and where the teaching acts are separated in time and place from the learning acts. Naidu (1994) said that:

Since many of the instructional activities commonly associated with conventional face-to-face instruction, such as classroom discussion and immediate and direct feedback, are not easy to provide in the Distance Education context, the role of the instructional materials that are prepared in advance of the learning activity is especially important. Indeed, the quality of the teaching and learning process in open and distance education is dependent on the quality of the study materials. (p2)

To corroborate the stance of Naidu, Gbadamosi (2010) reported that improvisation and use of instructional materials was a major focus of the NIT training efforts under the MDGs charged them by Federal government of Nigeria in 2008. To this effect, good teachers would consider the following before beginning a teaching session:

### **Preliminary considerations**

Before beginning to teach, good teachers consider the following with a view to selecting appropriate instructional materials:

- i. The likely abilities of learners
- ii. The learners' level of education
- iii. The present level of learners knowledge
- iv. The social and cultural background
- v. Learners' motivation and interest.

### **Defining tasks**

On the basis of preliminary consideration, good teachers define the tasks:

- i. The learners' ultimate overall task
- ii. The major components of the task
- iii. The condition under which each component task will be performed
- iv. The level of performance that is desired for each task.

### **Task analysis**

Good teachers analyze the tasks:

- i. Deleting the tasks that learners can perform already
- ii. Selecting the most important and critical tasks
- iii. Stating what learners' will be able to do as a result of the lesson.

### **Structuring the lesson**

For quality and effectiveness, good teachers should provide structuring and lesson outline:

- i. Share the objectives of the lesson with the learners
- ii. Teach in logical order, using a lesson outline.

The development of high quality instructional materials for open and distance education is a labor intensive and costly affair. It draws upon a wide range of expertise that is not normally found in the repertoire of skills of any person. Therefore, some variation of a team approach to the process of developing instructional materials in open and distance education is widely recommended and should often be adopted for producing quality teachers in open and distance education (Shaw and Taylor, 1984).

The importance of instructional materials in open and distance education cannot be over emphasized as it has served and still consider to be the pillar on which the success of open and distance education rested. Over the years and even at the inception of open and distance education era, evidence abounds to confirm the role of instructional materials to boost the quality of teaching and learning in open and distance education in some countries beginning from colonial era with expansion in the development and utilization of instructional materials both in print and electronic media. The University of Ibadan higher education programs via open and distance learning as an example piloted the use of correspondence, face-to face contacts, and use

of radio and television as medium of instruction. However, this suffered a setback due to lack of fund, but still undaunted, the University's correspondence programs metamorphosed into the current external studies programs adopting instructional modes via print materials, production and supply of texts, and face-to-face contact sessions at the university for at least 12 weeks Intensive teaching and examinations. Also, the NTI Kaduna that was established in 1976 as a model institution for teacher education, and as a response to the surge in the enrollment in primary schools across Nigeria which rose from 5.5 million to 8 million due to the introduction of Universal Primary Education policy which created an urgent need for more qualified teachers, opted to use distant learning approach utilizing printed-self-instructional materials, weekend face-to-face interactions with tutors at study centers across the country, and also emphasizes the use of audio-visuals with a gradual shift to on-line technology (Adegbija et al, 2013).

Some other countries also took the advantage of instructional materials to boost the production of quality of teachers in open and distance education by engaging in the use of different types of instructional strategies. Chile, in her major reform of children education system with a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning, changes in the curriculum, and decentralization, and with an advance communication infrastructure, established in-service program for her teachers to enable them learn how to use information communication technology for quality teaching. It uses ICT to teach teachers to use ICT in distance education to extend the geographical reach of the program. Among the positive outcomes of the program was the provision of quality assurance that was put in place to check the quality of the teaching materials as they are developed, and improvement in the quality of teachers who had participated in the program (UNESCO, 2001).

In Brazil, television-plus was adopted as instructional strategy to stimulate interest in education, teaching and learning among teachers and broader community. This instructional strategy had a reach of about 13 million audiences. Brazil took this step to improve the poor quality of her teacher which had been a matter of concern to the country. Teachers in Brazil were well-provided with all kinds of development opportunities in open and distance education. One of her goals was to mobilize teachers for quality teaching using media technology. The outcome of this program revealed that 60% of the teachers viewed the program for personal development (65%) to get lesson plan, (39%) to stimulate classroom discussion, (30%) as background material for home work, (26%) and for content information (14%). Teachers were the most benefitted in the program (UNESCO, 2001).

### **The Characteristics of Instructional and Learning Materials**

Dhanarajan (2000) affirmed the indispensability of instructional materials in open and distance education. He emphasized and pointed out that instructional and learning materials must be well designed instructionally, recognized, and addressed potential learning behavior and styles; it should take note of learner's study circumstances and life experiences and be user friendly. In addition, language of the instructional materials must be simple, unambiguous, and communicative. Olaitan and Ali (1997) asserted that for the instructional materials to be used meaningfully and effectively, they must meet the following characteristics:

1. **Variety** – the learning materials must be capable of providing varied learning experiences.
2. **Accuracy** – the information must be accurate.
3. **Economic** – the materials must be economical, both in terms of cost and time of use.

4. **Adaptability** – learning materials should be adaptable to the prevailing environment or teaching situations. Also, should be adaptable to level of development of the individual student.
5. **Durability** – learning materials should last for quite a long period of time. For example, the electronic media are materials that can be stored for a long period of time.

### **The criteria for selection of instructional and learning materials**

When selecting instructional and learning materials, there are some criteria to be considered and on which the selection should be based. They are as follow:

1. **The age of the learners** – materials that suite the age of the learners are to be selected. This will make it to be less complex for them to understand.
2. **Entry Level** –previous knowledge of the learners should be established. Each material used at any level of comprehension should be such that fits within the level of comprehension of the learners. It must be built upon acquired experiences. To this effect, materials that require high level of thinking in lower class should not be used.
3. **Quantity and quality of instructional and learning materials available** – learning materials that are durable are to be selected. It is important to be sure that the quantity of the materials available would be enough to serve all the learners. A check also should be made to determine the quality of the materials to ensure that they meet the standard required.
4. **Cost of instructional and learning materials** – instructional and learning materials that are of moderate costs should be used to avoid wastage.

### **Types and Effect of Utilizing Instructional Materials in Open and Distance Education**

Nwoji (2002) listed some of the instructional materials that could be used in open and distance education. These instructional materials are developed and used as potent weapon in teaching and learning, and proved to boost the quality of teachers in open and distance education system. Some of the instructional materials identified by Nwoji (2002) are the following:

1. **Printed materials** – In correspondence education, printed words are the keys and medium of expression between the teacher or correspondence institution and the students. The teacher prepares educational materials and sends them to the students. The students read them at their own time and respond to questions and quizzes related to the text (Egwuatu, (2000)). In the same vein, Nzeribe (1991) affirmed that the whole success of distance education program depends to a large extent on the provision of course materials for the learners. Race (1989) however emphatically asserted that all materials that are produced through text, graphic, or representation and reproduction fall under the category of print technology. These include books, pamphlets, and special commentaries or supplement to already published materials; specially written self-instructional texts or tutorials-in-prints etc. These instructional printed materials are regarded to be the most accessible and easy to apply to teaching and learning in both conventional classroom and open and distance education system (Nacino-Brown et al, 1982).



2. **Newspaper** – this is an alternative to the use of printed materials. Sometimes printed materials form a part of the newspaper which could be stored for reference purposes by the learners. It is also observed that in some countries, newspapers provide free spaces for instructional materials aimed at either the youth or adults (Keegan, 1990).
3. **Radio programs** – Radio is a valuable tool in teaching students how to listen effectively. Nacino-Brown et al (1982) emphasized that one of the significant values of the radio is that radio programs provide curriculum materials for learning. Most of the time, radio program broadcast can supplement older materials in textbooks, thereby given an authority and newness to the subject being studied. Radio plays important part in open and distance education, and is widely used by some countries due to its closeness to reality, and people’s dependence on it for information, entertainment, and education.
4. **Audio Cassettes** – the tape recordings have the same educational values as the radio. However, they are used whenever it is needed. The record player can be played over and over if necessary at exactly the time the materials are needed. This helps to master the topic contain there-in.
5. **Instructional Television** – this made the teacher to be seen and heard by the student aided by the variety of audio visual equipment. It is the most advanced simulation of classroom contact. The television programs emphasize the experimental side of science technology by demonstration equipment and by leading students through experimental procedures (Nwana, 1991).
6. **Video Tapes** – through this, the distant learners are able to control the television broadcast programs. They are aids that help the distance education learner who is separated from the teacher to enjoy an instruction indirectly.
7. **Computers** – the American Library Association defined information technology as the application of computers and other technologies to the information handling, acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval, and dissemination. Computers and other corollaries like telefascimiles (FAX), electronic mail (e-mail) and other yet to emerge make Student-teacher interactions very easy (Oketunji, 2000).
8. **Telephones** – telephone is used as a means of maintaining a two-way communication between teacher and students in distance education. It is used in combination with the radio as the “radio-tutorial” or in teleconferencing. It is initiated by either the student or the teacher and has become some of the most effective ways of using television mode of education. It offers the opportunity for interactive exchange of information among group of people and this aids the distance education process.

### **Effects of Utilizing Learning Materials on Distance Education**

Mohammed (2000) noted that in Distance Education students interact more with their course materials than with tutors. According to Mohammed (2000), the course materials must be specially developed to provide opportunity for ‘student-tutor’ interactions in teaching learning programs. Instructional and learning materials in Distance Education perform the following functions:

- i. They help to express an abstract idea or concept which is difficult;
- ii. They provide visual relief from amounts of text;
- iii. They motivate learners;

- iv. They make it easier for the learner to remember information;
- v. They appeal to learner's intellect, or emotion, or both at the same time (Grachuhi and Matriu, 1989)

Okebukola and Shabani (2000) asserted that distance education learning materials should represent the teachers except for the physical presence of the teacher in the classroom. Discussing further and specifically on the on-line course materials, Okebukola and Shabani (2000) observed that some of the major purposes of using learning materials include:

- i. Accessibility
- ii. Relative ease and comfort of online study
- iii. Lower cost
- iv. Environment friendly
- v. Easier to manage
- vi. Rapid feedback

The positive roles of instructional materials in open and distance education are inexhaustible. However, as positive as they may prove, that is not to say that they are devoid of problems. Some of the problems that could affect the use of instructional materials in Distance Education Programs are:

- i. Potential for poor use;
- ii. Resource design is complicated and time consuming;
- iii. User unfamiliarity;
- iv. Technical constraints;

Other problems as identified by Anujeonye (2008) and Egwuatu (2005) that could hinder the effective use of Instructional and learning materials in Distance Education include the following:

- i. Cost;
- ii. Lack of relevant software;
- iii. Limited access to the internet;
- iv. Non uniformity in the standard of teaching;
- v. Truancy;

Fewer programs in science and technology – most programs run by institutions under their distance education system are in education and management science.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has endeavored to look into the roles of instructional materials in open and distance education for production of quality teachers by briefly discussing the concepts and definitions of distance education, historical background and assessment of the development of open and distance education in the world, and Nigeria in particular. Characteristics and criteria for selection of instructional materials, preliminary consideration of the characteristics and criteria, definitions and analysis of tasks, and lesson structuring in distance education are all x-rayed in this paper. Also, the paper further looked into the types and effects of instructional materials in

open and distance education, including the identification and discussion of some instructional materials among others. The effect and utilization of instructional materials are also not left out of discussion in the paper.

Open and Distance Education has become a reality throughout the world as many developed and developing countries are utilizing this opportunity through the development of infrastructure and information communication technology to make access to education possible and easier for those who for one reason or the other would not have had access to education. The invention of print and electronic media has also made the role of instructional materials very important in open and distance education system, even more than the conventional face-to-face education system. However, there is still concern about the quality of teachers and the programs in open and distance education. Access to modern technology is still very limited. Most of the factors that may hinder the success of open and distance education are already discussed in this paper. The challenge therefore, is that the use of a variety of instructional materials to improve access to good quality education with adequate funding must be given serious attention as they (instructional materials) have greater roles to play in producing quality teachers in open and distance education. This will further make the goals of distance education in Nigeria achievable, Adegbija et al (2013), observed that the achievement of Nigerian government's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of education for all through Open and Distance Learning could be sustainable and improved, if instructional materials are well utilized in Open and Distance Education program.

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