

**LEARNERS SUPPORT SERVICES AND ACADEMIC GOALS
ACHIEVEMENT OF NIGERIA DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between learners' support services and academic goals achievement of Nigeria Distance Education. Descriptive survey of correlation type was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to select 15000 respondents from the directors, state coordinators, course facilitators, centre managers, centers desk officers and education officers. All the respondents were selected from the Open University, institute of education and National Teachers' Institute Centres. Test re-test reliability method was used to determine the reliability index of .66 and .61 for Learners Support Services Questionnaire (LSSQ) and Academic Goals Achievement Questionnaire (AGAQ) respectively. Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used to test all the five operational hypothesis generated for the study, at .05 significance level. The availability and utilization of learners' support services are too low to enhance academic goals achievement variables like discipline, research publications, students academic performance. It was however recommended that provision of instructional facilities to aid learners' support services should be joint responsibility of well meaning Nigerians, National, International bodies and the students. If provided they will aid effective goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Keywords: *learners support services, academic goals achievement and Nigerian Distance Education.*

Introduction

Education is an instrument for the National Transformation, security and development. Ogundele and Oparinde (2012) described education as a social responsibility and birth right which every individual should enjoy as a member of a country. Every individual wants quality education for their children, every one wants their children to be educated and have a sound and solid education, it should be noted that those that qualify do not gain admission into Conventional Universities due to high students population explosion and high demand for higher education in Nigeria. Ojedele (2000) described illiteracy as the bane of national development that any government that did not encourage mass literacy of their citizen, such country may not be ranked high among the developed nations of the world. Ogundele (2008) also noted that any nation that toy with the education of their youths such nations are toying with national development transformation, positive changes and innovation. Education sector had become the most popular sector which had attracted highest patronage to extent that admission policy become a problematic issue in Nigeria. Ogundele and Oparinde

(2012) noted that many qualified and brilliant students were not given admission into conventional institutions of higher learning. There are some candidates that could not leave to pursue their educational career in the conventional schools. Many are interested in educational pursuit, yet they are confronted by series of problems like poor family, background, economic factors and admission requirements.

However, in the interest of providing equal opportunities for all Nigerian citizens, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) recognized the importance of distance education as an alternative to conventional institution that would take care of candidates of various admission problems. Ejetero and Ogundele (2008) defined distance education as the types of education that are supplied to the citizens which separate the teachers from the students in terms of space, physical facilities, time and other resources in the process of curriculum delivery. The authors said that both the teachers and the students consult with various technological devices such as internet, videos & compact computer television (CCTV) and other services to accompany effective teaching learning process.

Dare (2013) observed that distance education programmes are in three models namely i) single mode of operation process, example of this model is National Teachers' Institute; ii) Dual-model- the institutions that incorporate distance education into their conventional institution programmes such as sandwich, correspondence, e-learning; iii) part-time, e-library and e-examination. Jegede (2012) described distance education as the education system specifically designed for the citizen that are generally disadvantaged in terms of accessibility, socio-cultural background, religion, economic, full time working conditions, those that find it difficult to gain admission into conventional institution and those that could not secure government scholarship for full time studies.

It should be noted that in Nigeria, distance education had attracted many candidates to extent that without adequate learners support services effective academic goals may be difficult to achieve. Lawal (2001) described learners support services as those services or activities that are provision for the learners which aid effective curriculum delivery. Lawal however noted that provision of support services for the learners will enhance conducive teaching learning environment reduce learner drop out and wastage rate. Lawal regarded poor learning support services as the bane of teachers' productivity in the school system. The author noted that learners support services can be used interchangeably as students personal services and welfare services.

Olagoke (2011) saw learners support services as those relevant activities that the teachers, students and other members school community and security utilized in order to enhance effectiveness in the teaching-learning process and community services in the schools. Olagoke however, cited example of learners support services like the transportation services, welfare services, counseling services, recreational services, library and information services, extra-curricular services.

Oyedeji (2012) regarded students support services as an integral and essential part of educational administration. Oyedeji however described students support services as those activities or services provided in the school system for the learners use which aid interpersonal harmony conducive teaching-learning environment and for the personnel and institutional esteem both within and the outside the institution. Oyedeji however identified important learners support services like academic counselling services, financial service, welfare services, extra and co-curricular activities, library and information services, employment and placement services. The author however noted that the availability of the services in the school will aid effective goals achievement of the educational system.

Since Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) recognized the importance of open and distance education in Nigeria. This is because Nigerian wants egalitarians in education regardless of diversity in age, sex, culture, religion and ethnics. The government wants equal accessibility to education in Nigeria in the year 2020. However, for effective goals achievement of Nigeria distance education, there is the need to provide learners support services which will enhance effective goals achievement variables like students academic performance, research publication patronage, discipline quality assurance of the products and community services.

Sherau (2012) stated that the National Teachers' Institute in a bid to enhance quality control and assurance in the products of the institute had connected all study centres with the institute, equipped the centres with computer system and library service. The gesture of the national teachers' Institute had greatly supported the Nigerian distance education learners in the services provided by the institute. However, the rationale for this study is to examine the relationship between learners' support services and academic goals achievement of Nigeria distance education.

Statement of the Problem

The study focused on the learners support services and academic goals achievement of Nigeria distance education. Distance education had become a globally acceptance system of education in Nigeria. The need for the learners' support services by the institutions and stakeholders of distance education are basically for effective goals achievement to investigate the available types of learners support services, utilization strategies, the associated problems, solution and the influence.. Solution academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Purpose of the Study

The aims of the study are to:

- Examine the available types of the learners support services for Nigerian distance education

- Investigate the associated problems confronting learners support services of Nigerian distance education.
- Investigate the presence of academic goals achievement variables in Nigerian distance education.
- Find out the influence of learners support services on the academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the research study.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between learners support services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between library services and academic goals achievement of Nigeria distance education.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between welfare support service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between information and communication services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.
- Ho₅: There is no significant relationship between career services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design of a correlation type. The study investigated the relationship between learners support services and academic education. The study populations distance education. The study population comprised of directors, course facilitators, state coordinators, centre managers, centre desk officers, education officer. and students representatives from 10 centres in each of the six geo-political region. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to select 1500 respondents for the study. Also five research hypotheses were generated for the study.

Two research instruments used are Learners Support Services Questionnaire (LSSQ) and Academic Goals Achievement Questionnaire (AGAQ) were used to collect relevant data for the study. Construct and content validity of the instrument were assured through comments and criticisms from distance education experts. Test-retest reliability method was adopted to determine the reliability index of the instrument. The scores of the test retest reliability are correlated using spearman ranking order statistics and tested at .05. The reliability index obtained was .66 and .61 for LSSQ and AGAQ respectively. Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used to test all the null hypotheses at .05 significance level. The data collected were subjected to statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) of computer programme.

Results

Find below the results of the data analysis made

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Learners Support Services and Academic Goals Achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Table 1: Learners Support Services and Academic Goals achievement of Nigerian Education.

Variable	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	Calculated r-value	critical r-value	Decision
LSS	1500	72.4	52.17	1499	.74	.196	Ho ₁ Rejected
AGAQ	1500	66.87	48.11				

Table 1: shows that the calculated r-value of .74 is greater than critical r-value of -.196 at the degree of freedom of 1499 and tested at .05 significance level. Hence the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between learners support service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education is however rejected. The result shown that high positive significant relationship between learners Support service and academic goal achievement of Nigerian distance education. The result is in line with the opinion of Sherau (2012), which stated that the national teachers institute in Nigeria is equipped with series of services of which enhance quality assurance in the products of the institute. Sherau however stated that there is communication service like mobile phone, internets all which aid effective teaching learning process and academic goals achievement.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between library service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Table 2: Library service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Variable	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	Calculated r-value	critical r-value	Decision
LSS	1500	69.37	22.4	1499	.51	.196	Ho ₂ Rejected
AGAQ	1500	66.87	48.11				

Table 2: Also indicates that the calculated r-value of .51 is greater than the critical r-value of .196 at the degree of freedom of 1499 and tested at .05 significance level. Hence the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between library service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education is therefore rejected. It means that high significant relationship exist library service and academic goals achievement. The result was supported by Oyedeji (2012), who noted that library service provision in the schools enhances high commitment, self discipline, promote reading culture, research mindset and academic performance of both the teachers and the students. It should be noted that Nigerian

distance education study centre provide library facilities for the students use, which encourage effective reading habits and high success rate among the distance education students in Nigeria. The result was rejected by Odunlayo (2010), which stated that the library service provided for Nigerian distance education students are being hampered by poor technological know-how, regular power failure and school environmental problems which made library service difficult for the Nigerian distance education. Yet the students made use of few library facilities provided in the centres for their teaching learning process

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between welfare support service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Table 3: Learner’s welfare support services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.

Variable	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	Calculated r-value	critical r-value	Decision
LWSS	1500	52.41	16.33				
AGA	1500	66.87	48.11	1499	.36	.196	Ho ₃ Rejected

Table 3 reveals that the calculated r-value of .36 is greater than the critical r-value of .196 at the degree of freedom of 1499 and tested at .05 significance level. Hence the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significance relationship between learners welfare supports services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education is however rejected. It indicates that there is low positive significant relationship between learners welfare support service and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education. The result is supported by the action of Aregbesola administration of Osun State Nigeria, who provided adequate welfare services like daily hunch, school uniforms and scholarship to the primary and secondary schools students in Osun state. The Moronfoye and Ogundele (2013), also called for adequate provision of welfare services to the students to encourage them to be stable in their various schools. The advocated welfare services are accommodation, feeding, reading and writing books and other writing materials. However, in Nigerian distance education the provision of welfare service is so low. But the students use the opportunity provided to enhance effective performance.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between information and communication services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Table 4: information and communication services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Variable	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	Calculated r-value	critical r-value	Decision
ICS	1500	62.17	38.66				
AGA	1500	66.87	48.11	1499	.32	.196	Ho ₄ Rejected

Table 4 shows that the calculated r-value of .32 is greater than the critical r-value of .196 at the degree of freedom of 1499 and tested at .05 significance level. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between information and communication services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education is however rejected. This was supported by Etejere and Ogundele (2008), who stated that the problems of low technological development, power failure, mass illiteracy and poverty made the use of few available information and communication services and facilities difficult. However Sherau (2012), stated that every study centres of Nigerian distance education are connected with the internet facilities, they are mobile phones, inter connectivity and modular books. The use of facilities made academic goals achievement possible.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between career services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance Education.

Table 5: Career services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian Distance Education.

Variable	No	\bar{X}	Sd	Df	Calculated r-value	critical r-value	Decision
Career Service	1500	48.32	42.51				
Academic Goals Achievement	1500	66.87	48.11	1499	.56	.196	H ₀₅ Rejected

Table 5 shows that the calculated r-value of .66 is greater than the critical r-value of .196 at the degree of freedom of 1499 and tested at .05 significance level hence, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between career services and academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education, however rejected. The result indicates that high significant relationship exist between career services provided for the Nigerian distance education and academic goals achievement. Olaore (2011), also supported that the availability of effective career counseling services in education system aid effectiveness of courses, patronage to a successful skills self understanding of their problems, and orientation to a specific course. However there is effective career services into Nigerian distance education which encourage high level patronage into the system of education. Modibbo (2004), noted that Nigerian distance education attracted high level patronage of the students that could not be admitted by the conventional institutions. Majority take advantages of the distance education to go to the courses of their choice and interest without any discrimination in the certificate acquired.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the data analysis and discussion of findings, the study revealed that the learners support services are very low for the Nigerian distance education students. Also the few available learners support services are affected by factors of constant power failure, low technological know-low, mass illiteracy and high poverty level and school environmental problems. From the finding, it was discovered that career counseling services play high significant role in encourages high numbers of

students patronage into Nigerian distance education. However it could be concluded that, despite the low level of learners' support services for the Nigerian distance education many citizens still take the advantages and opportunities provided for the learners to achieve their aims and interest in relating to their educational pursuit. Therefore the availability of learners support services aids effective goals achievement of Nigerian distance education programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the result of findings and conclusion made the following recommendations are made:

- Provision of learners support equipments for effective services are joint responsibility of everyone. This is to say that is effective learners support services of Nigerian distance education are to be enhanced, the parents, philanthropies, teachers, government and well meaning Nigerian should be involved in the provision of facilities for effective services in the interest of academic goals achievement of Nigerian distance education.
- Public-private partnership should be adequately involved in the learners welfare services of Nigerian distance education students: The private and public should be involved in the provision of welfare facility in the internet of learners support service. Both private and public and private – public sectors be allowed to provide transport services, hostels, offices, feedings, book, recreational and sporting facility which the learners can me to enhance effective teaching. Learning process in the internet of academic goals achievement.
- There should be adequate integration of information and communication Technology (ICT). Into Nigeria distance education programme. Every centers should the equipped with the communication devices the CCTV e-library mobile e-phone learning e-mail, e-examination and interconnecting which the students can me to make their studies, and research publication possible.
- Adequate space should be provided for distance education centers to install history service equipment which will support the learners in bid for quality certificates. The federal government should assist the centers in the provision of modern text books internet facilities, computers, journal, dissertation abstract and encyclopedia. If done they will provide adequate facilities that will aid library support service for the distance education students and there by assist in the academic goals achievement.
- Career Counseling unit should be established in the community: Association of career Counseling in conjunction with the states and local Government Area should establish a formidable career counseling unit in the community so as to provide adequate counseling service for the youths, adult in the areas of their career choices in the internet of academic goals achievement of Nigeria distance education finally provision of human capital development for the Nigeria distance education lectures. The government

should sponsor the distance education teachers in their research publications conference and workshops. If done it will enable them to meet up with the global changes and innovations and thereby aid effective goals achievement of Nigeria distance education programmes

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