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# QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR DISTRIBUTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY


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***Abstract***

*This paper is an attempt to show how teachers have been trying to achieve the standards given by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for the graduation of distributive education teachers. However, since the emergence of the use of information technology in Nigerian business transactions, emphasis should have shifted to computer-based pedagogy to replace standards driven and teacher centred curricula. This paper argues that student-centred approach by which students select goals, timelines, assessment and have much more computer based practicals will motivate students much more, offer them more opportunities to carry out their own projects of study and prepare them better for self-employment. The paper recommends various measures (such as workshops for business education teachers and professional accreditation visitation of university teachers) before reaccreditations. Recognition for teachers that have ICT abilities to facilitate effective and qualitative distributive teacher education in Nigeria, will help to provide quality assurance.*


**Introduction**

Quality has been defined as the "totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy given needs, or fitness for use or conformance to requirements" (Okorafor, 2006:1). This means that a product or service should fit the purpose or standard for which it exists. Accordingly, quality may be measured in terms of design, or conformance to design or to meeting its expected performance standard. By implication, whenever quality is monitored, deviations must be controlled. This effort will help to ensure standard and thereby give assurance to the owners of the enterprise. In other words, to ensure quality assurance, owners of a business should monitor their enterprise internally to ensure that stated procedures are followed. They should also make sure that their results measure up with their expectations (Okorafor, 2006). In this paper, distributive education refers to marketing education. It is the process of preparing business education undergraduates to become distributive or marketing teachers. In the Nigerian context however, curriculum is still central to educative effort where the success of a technical curriculum (including business education) is measured by students' achievements at school as shown in test scores, whereas measurement should have been also through their achievements or correct performance at their places of employment (Finch and Crunkilton, 1999).

Business teacher education is an undergraduate programme involving exposure of between 120 and 192 credit hours, achieved within four years. Courses are weighted for the



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four years in contact hours, according to the following percentages: 50 percent general education, 20 percent business courses, 15 percent teaching courses and 15 percent, to *professional education* courses *(Ndinechi,* 2001). The backing for these time allocations in percentages came from Clark, Clark and Thomas (1975). It is important at this point to state that this proposal made for the United States of America in 1975 has been thrown out since 1995 (Ray 2002), it should be replaced in Nigeria too.

There should be 20 per cent time allocation for general education, 30 per cent for business courses, 30 per cent for teaching courses and 20 per cent for professional education courses. The National Universities Commission (NUC) usually sets standards for universities to follow as the supervisory agency. The NUC uses two sets of strategies: the five year accreditation visitations, and the minimum academic standards for academic programmes. Accreditation visitations are carried out by experts in education including business educators. Altogether there is a percentage value for various key elements in an academic programme which the accreditation team scores. The key elements and their values are as follows: academic content 23 percent, physical facilities 32 percent, library resources 12 percent, funding 5 percent and employers rating of graduates 3 percent Okorafor, (2006).

**The Problem**

The National Policy on Education (2009) states, among other goals of teacher education, at Section 8 Subsection 71 that education should provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.

Subsection 72 states that: all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained. Teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. (FME, 2009:39, 4.)

It can be deducted from the above goals that tertiary teacher education should provide trainee teachers with professional abilities to successfully manage changes that require education. It is the contention of this paper that distributive teacher education in Nigeria lacks computer literacy skills components, cognitive skills competences, and practical skills competencies expected by the National Policy on Education.

**Distributive Education Courses:** In the past, several tertiary institutions made distributive education to consist of marketing and cooperative courses. One of the original views is that distributive education should focus on the 22 occupational preparations for cognitive skills and practicals which are advertising services, apparel and accessories, automotive, finance and credit, floristry, food distribution, food service, general merchandise hardware and building materials, farm and garden supplies and equipment, home furnishings, hotel and lodging, industrial marketing, insurance, international trade, personal services, petroleum sales, real estate, recreation and tourism, transportation, retail trade and wholesale trade. Harms, Stehr, Harris, (1972), and Osuala (2002).





By implication distributive education students should be exposed to theoretical and practical ideas on agricultural, trade and industrial, home economics, health and service industries. Osuala (2002) recommended that, students should be exposed practically to marketing competencies, technological competencies, social competencies, basic skill competencies and economic competencies in their school activities.

**Use of ICT for commercial purposes**

The United States Congress authorized the use of internet for commercial purposes in 1995 (Ray, 2002). From that year, teachers were challenged to shift from their previous emphasis on certain manual and mechanical skills to digital literacy. There was new emphasis or objective such as:

1. Technological literacy meaning competence in the use of information communication technologies.
2. Information literacy meaning ability to find, evaluate and make appropriate use of information including the use of ICTs. Other objectives were:
3. Functional literacy
4. Scientific literacy
5. Cultural literacy and global awareness (Tinio, 2003).

Teachers were also expected to retrain themselves intensely so as to meet up with market demands for labor which included inventive thinking abilities, higher order thinking and ability to communicate effectively.

**Further Paradigm shift in Educative Emphasis**

Since 1995, many countries of the West have shifted from their industrial sector traditions in education into demands of the information society. The following are features of the new emphasis in schools of Europe and America:

1. Activities and objectives are determined by learners in small groups; really many different practical activities are carried out at a pace determined by the learners.
2. The students work in teams, are heterogeneous and supportive of each other;
3. Students are creatively productive and find new solutions to problems. They integrate theory and practice, establish relations between subjects, work on themes and benefit from teams of teacher sacting as facilitators. Their assessment is student-directed and diagnostic Tinio, (2003), Wikipedia, (2010).

The shift in pedagogy above has also been addressed by Young (2005), who opined that for distributive specifically all students generally to benefit from education, there was need to shift from the traditional to modern approaches of teaching, presented below.

**Ten new strategies of teaching to accompany the new pedagogies**

1. Teachers should know that students who come to school are henceforth *responsible for*



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*their learning.* They are the people in need Teachers concern will be to help them to set attainable goals within available timelines (for each individual).

2. Teachers should allow more room for peer *interaction and collaboration* in sourcing information, locating information and demonstrating learning.
3. Teachers should offer assessment *feedback* more promptly.
4. *Assessment* of students should be diagnostic and three-dimensional: by the student, his peers and the teacher.
5. *Textbooks* should be regarded as one of several possible sources of useful information; no longer the manual only for a sequence of learning.
6. Teachers offer of *information* in class or school should be as facilitators not authoritarians. There may be other sources of information known to students that can solve the problem in hand.
7. Each class session is to be an avenue for *problem-solving* and focused on the students' *needs.*
8. *Instructions* by teachers are also to be guidelines .on problem solving that may assist or which may be rejected if not useful,
9. The *context* of learning will be real problems from business world and call for multidisciplinary solutions.
10. *Technology use* is not the major emphasis but only one of many new skills that help students to learn new ideas. Emphasis should not be on expertise in technology use but using the machines as facilitators of fresh research and teach (Young, 2005:3).

**Distributive Teacher Education in Nigerian Universities**

Distributive/Marketing Education for teachers is an option of study in many Nigerian universities. Theoretical approaches dominate the classrooms. After two years of general business and professional education courses, students undertake teaching practice and industrial training for six months during which they do not attend lectures in their universities. **S**upervision of teaching practice and industrial training is done by university lecturers. However students show doubtful evidence that they really benefited from both experiences. Students graduate from universities still claiming that they learnt little that are of significance to the business world of work (Nwazor, 2011).

An alternative approach to distributive teacher education according to Harms, Stehr & Harris (1972) should include three months of project work, not their research. Each student should select a shop location from any of the 22 occupational areas. They should find assistants, run the shops for three months and given real accounts as other shop owners do to their departments. Their universities should provide goods and stipends for assistants as well as rent and electricity. At graduation, each student from this approach will easily become self -employed. In any case, after such an experience, they would have become more realistic at school work too.

Today the Nigerian distributive sector is occupied by semi-literate, inconsiderately self





centred merchants. Distributive education as an answer to many of the ills of the economy is neglected. This is still a big contrast to what happens outside Africa.

**Features of The New Economies where Internet is used**

The internet has helped several countries to have new markets operating very differently from market in Nigeria. In those countries there are virtual shops that operate throughout the days and nights, keep little inventories, advertise very easily, and transact businesses within seconds (Ray, 2002). In addition, information about the market is usually nearly perfect, markets are integrated, and buyers are unlimited in number, while markets are buyer- centred. To start a business is as easy as it is to build one up. This high efficiency is attributed to high level of technology usage which is learnt in schools abroad by students and by workers.

Distributive education will produce better graduates if those two approaches stated above are adopted. Before the adoption however, distributive teacher education curriculum and teaching should first be revisited.

**Steps to adoption of ICT in Distributive Teacher Education**

Timo (2003) identified several challenges to be addressed before any country can adopt high-scale ICT education system. Some of the challenges are a good look at the goals envisaged in adopting ICT, choice of ICT model, how to raise supporting resources, nature of infrastructure, the nature and number of factors in favour and against the introduction. Electricity has to be available always. The types of ICT that exist in the society should be thought of because the school follows the society not the other way round. Government agreement and development efforts should also be very visible.

By implication it means that the National Assembly should have enacted an enabling law to compel ICT to be used more vigorously for teaching in schools. There would be many benefits from such a measure. For example - Distributive education based on ICT can strengthen students' motivation, promote their communication, reduce disruptive behaviours, build stronger teacher-student relationships, promote discovery or active learning and make students responsible for their own learning (Felder, 2007).

**Presentation of Initial basic ideas**

Ray (2002) opined that the basic ideas to teach in ICT -based distributive teacher education are as follows: the concept of e-businesses (pure play, integration and trans formation), interaction between e-commerce that is business to business, and business to consumer; advantages and disadvantages of e-commerce, basic statistics, and e-commerce data. Next, there should be tutorials on how internet works, showcasing all modules. Other topics are e-security, history of cryptography, in addition to e-marketing, and e-finance following on-line marketing modules. Other topics are online auctions, supply chain management, enterprise supply planning and mark-up languages using suitable sites.



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Students can be taught to create websites, with its advantages and disadvantages. Legal, cultural and tax issues in e-commerce can be taught too as well as their international implications Ray, (2002).

**Conclusion**

The ideas presented in this paper show that accreditation visitations and issuing minimum academic standards of the NUC to universities cannot successfully produce accomplished business graduate-teachers who possess modern competencies learnt with the internet. The introduction of ICT programmes in distributive education for teaching is strongly suggested. What to teach and how to teach it have also been presented in this paper in the hope that Nigerian distributive education graduates will rise to a higher quality in the nearest future.

**Recommendations**

In view of the urgency to have computer literate distributive teacher education graduates, the following recommendations are made:

1. Experts in e-commerce should be invited to help willing business educators to learn necessary ICT skills for use in teaching distributive education in universities.
2. The NUC should reduce total credit hours to general education to 20 percent so as to allocate more hours to distributive education and professional business education courses. This will allow for more depth and practicals.
3. Since the ICT issue is still being debated in terms of its merits and demerits, the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) should commission an empirical study on it. "The first rule of any technology used in business is that automation applied to an efficient operation, will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency (Gates, n.d) a lot of homework/house cleaning may help before automation is embarked on.
4. The National University Commission's accreditation visitations should be supplemented with professional visitation by Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN). As professionals, ABEN members should insist on adequately functional laboratories, working equipment and computer literate teachers. They should insist on attainment of suitable standards before programmes are reaccredited.
5. ABEN executives should lobby governments to organise workshops to reequip ABEN members with new computer-based technologies in distributive education so that they can possess operating skills, word processing skills, desktop publishing skills and other skills in spread sheet, graphics, database, networking, telecommunication, multimedia integration and media communication.
6. More finances should be mandatorily provided for distributive teacher education at Federal and State universities in Nigeria.





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