

---

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE USEFULNESS OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (NCE) OBTAINED THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

---

By

**James O. Ezema, Ph.D**

*Department of Adult and Continuing Education,  
Enugu State University of Science and Technology,  
Agbani*

## **Abstract**

*The study investigated perceptions of the usefulness of Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE) obtained through distance education programme in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design employing stratified random sampling was used to sample 588 NTI-NCE distance learners from Ebonyi and Enugu States. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was face validated by experts in the field of education. Reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained using cronbach alpha method of determining internal consistency of instrument. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was analysed using t-test statistic. The research revealed that the NTI-NCE programme was found to be useful. Significant difference does not exist between the mean scores of NTI-NCE distance Learners in Ebonyi State and those in Enugu State on the usefulness of the NTI-NCE programme. Recommendations were made among others that certificates obtained from NTI programmes should be recognized by the general public and the teaching profession in particular.*

**Keywords:** Perceptions, usefulness and distance education

Distance learning is increasingly being looked to by many institutions as an economical way of expanding their activities, widening opportunities for students around the world and making effective use of the new technologies, which are rapidly emerging. This is inline with UNESCO (2012), which had stated that:

In efforts to meet the new and changing demands, for education and training, open and distance learning may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstances, an appropriate substitute for the face-to-face methods that still dominates most educational systems. The distance education alternative with all its palpable advantages of access and flexibility seems to be the solution to the problem (p. 44).

Many stakeholders in the education sector are interested in the open and distance learning scheme because it allows greater access to educational opportunities.

### *Perceptions of the...*

---

This is in keeping with the stated objectives of the National Policy on Education (revised in 2013) that “maximum efforts shall be made to enable those who can 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 programmes”. This is palpable advantage which the open and distance learning enjoys above the conventional system more so when it restricts the period for programme completion to specific time frames.

The open and distance learning scheme holds a number of potentials for various stakeholders in the education and development process. To the learner, ODL means more freedom of access and thereby, a wide range of opportunities for learning and qualification. It is often a cheaper means of attending school for the student since some people may not be able to leave their places of work to go to school full time. For example, ODL is often the most cost effective means. For example, for the government and educational policy makers, the system is a panacea to the problem of provision of equitable and accessible education at an affordable and cost-effective way. As the number of people with access to computers and the internet grows, distance learning is becoming an increasing way to attend school (Lewis, 2008). He went further to state that distance learning programmes are particularly attractive to many non-traditional students, including low-income parents who often must not fix their classes around work and family responsibilities. The use of distance learning can also cut down on long times, which cannot be claimed as hours of participation under the face-to-face situation.

While distance learning is not for everyone, it can be a valuable educational activity for those who have the literacy and computer skills to participate. A Texas TANF workforce commission study found that students in a distance learning programme were three times more likely to gain employment in the first quarter after they had left the programme, and earned an average of 1.118 per quarter more than THNF client in other programmes (Texas Workforce Commission, 2011). Low-income single mothers increase their earnings by 14 percent after participating in a New Jersey programme that loaned them laptop computers with internet access (Gatto, 2013). For states looking to improve the productivity of their workforce and increase earnings of people near the bottom of the income ladder, distance-learning programmes are worthy investment.

Programmes of distance learning have some basic features in common which broadly distinguish them from institution-centred modes of learning. Physical proximity is not requirement of study and programmes made available through distance learning will involve some degree of physical separation of the student (the learner) from the institution responsible for providing the teaching and making the awards.

Traditionally, distance learning programmes have attracted students whose geographic distance from a college campus prevented their enrolment in campus-based classes. However, some studies show that distance learning students tend to have less concrete learning styles, meaning that they can learn from a variety of context types and activities. Distance learning students also tend to have less of a need to relate to others in the educational environment than on-campus students.

### *Perceptions of the...*

---

Distance education has become paramount as an alternative method of course delivery being used by college and universities as they expand access to higher education at both the national and international levels. Its hallmark is that technology is used to bridge the instructor and students who are removed from direct, immediate physical contact (Hasenptug & Harnish; 2008). Through avenues such as distance education, individuals are able to improve their social and economic well-being as well as to range their educational attainment level. In U.S. geographic regions where the student population is widely distributed, public as well as political interest in distance education is especially high (Sherry & Morse, 2009). The same holds true for various countries as well, for instance, because of their remoteness away from conventional universities. In Australia, many Australian students have decided to obtain their education through distance education (Williams & Shama, 2008).

In essence, the impracticality of attending a conventional institution, scheduling conflicts, and preference for the distance education system itself is what motivates students to choose distance education courses. However, it is important to note that whether offered online, by correspondence study, or by videoconference, distance education appears to be in a unique position to serve diverse learners who cannot or will not participate in the traditional classroom setting. Distance education programmes are useful to mostly students who are typically older than traditional students with the average age being more than 25 years old, and they are more likely to be females rather than males. Distance education changes the learning relationship from the common, centralized school model to a more decentralized, flexible model. Distance education programmes are now numerous serving the needs of people in different contexts. Cases in point are the University of South Africa (UNISA), in Pretoria, serving both black and white students, has had a successful distance learning programme for decades. The Televised Japanese language programme, developed at North Carolina State University, provides instruction in Japanese Toten Colleges and Universities in five Southern States (Clifford, 2010).

At the elementary and middle school levels, distance learning usually takes the form of curriculum enrichment modules and ongoing programmes. Students work in collaborative groups, using manipulative and hands-on activities in a distance learning environment (Pacific Mountain Network, 2011).

In Nigeria today, many people especially adults are benefiting from many different educational programmes provided for access by different distance learning institutions such as the National Teachers' Institute located in Kaduna, and various distance education units of various institutions and the more recently established National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) that serves various educational provision to the vast population of Nigeria through the distance learning system (DLS).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate student's perception of the NTI-NCE distance education programme in Ebonyi and Enugu states of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the perceptions of students in Ebonyi and Enugu States on the usefulness of the NTI-NCE programme.

### **Research Question 1**

The following research question guided the study. This includes:

1. What are the ratings of perceptions of NTI-NCE distance learners in Ebonyi and Enugu States on the usefulness of the NTI-NCE programme as determined by the mean score?

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis, tested at 5 level of significance guided this study. This includes:

$H_{01}$ . There is no significant difference between the mean scores of NTI-NCE distance learners in Ebonyi State and those in Enugu State on the usefulness of NTI-NCE programme.

### **Research Method**

The design of the study was survey. This was because the study was concentrated on discussing the events as they were without any interference on what was observed. The population was 5877 NTI-NCE students currently enrolled at the centres in the two states.

The instrument for data collection was an 8 itemed four point scale response option questionnaire, with a response format of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) and numerical values of 4,3,2,1 respectively. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of education, one from measurement and evaluation and the other from distance education. Based on their comments, some items were reconstructed. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha formula and internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. The questionnaire was administered on the respondents at their study centres with the help of trained research assistants.

The research question was analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic at .5 level of significance. The decision rule for answering the research question was arrived at by finding the average of four point scale  $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.50$ . Therefore, the item with 2.50 and above was accepted which showed that the learners generally perceived the NTI distance education programme to be useful. In respect of the hypothesis, where the calculated t-value was equal or greater than the critical value of t, the null hypothesis was not accepted, but if less than the critical value, it was accepted.

### **Results**

The result of data analysis were presented in tables according to the research question and hypothesis.

**Research Question 1**

What are the ratings of perception of NTI-NCE distance learners in Ebonyi and Enugu states on the usefulness of the NTI-NCE programme as determined by the mean score?

**Table 1: perception of NTI-NCE distance learners regarding the usefulness of NTI – NCE programme N = 588**

	<b>Respondents</b>	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
	<b>Items</b>			
1.	Distance learning is an economical means of educational advancement	2.97	1.01	Agree
2.	Distance learning is an appropriate substitutes for the face-to-face method that dominates educational systems	3.02	1.01	Agree
3.	Distance learning scheme offers greater access to educational opportunities	2.74	0.95	Agree
4.	Distance learning offers more opportunities for learning and qualification	2.92	1.04	Agree
5.	Through distance education, individuals are able to improve their educational well –being	3.18	0.88	Agree
6.	Many students have decided to obtain their education through distance education, such as the NCE programme	2.87	1.04	Agree
7.	Distance education programmes are useful for mostly students who are typically older than the traditional students	3.27	0.86	Agree
8.	Distance learning provides access to students whose geographical distance prevents them from benefiting from campus – based classes	3.04	0.98	Agree
	Grand mean	2.81	0.88	Agree

The table above shows that a grand mean of 2.81 was obtained. This is an indication that the learners generally perceived the NTI programme as useful.

**Hypothesis**

HO<sub>1</sub>: This no significant difference between the mean scores of NTI-NCE distance learners in Ebonyi state and those in Enugu state on the usefulness of the NTI-NCE programme

**Table 2: t-test analysis of difference between the mean perception scores of NTI-NCE students in Ebonyi state and those in Enugu state regarding the usefulness of the NCE certificate of the NTI, Kaduna.**

State	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	DF	t-cal	t-cri	Decision
Enugu	353	3.11	1.00	586			Do not reject HO
Ebonyi	235	2.99	1.03		1.40	1.96	

The table shows that the calculated t-value is 1.40 and critical value of t is 1.96. Since the calculated value of t is less than the critical value of t, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean perception responses of NTI-NCE students in Ebonyi state and those of their counterparts in Enugu State with regards to the usefulness of the NCE certificate of NTI, Kaduna.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the research question revealed that the respondents generally perceived the NCE Certificate obtained from NTI, Kaduna to be useful. This finding is in agreement with UNESCO (2006) that in efforts to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, open and distance learning, may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstance, an appropriate substitute for the face – to – face methods that still dominates most educational systems.

This finding is however; in disagreement with Pacific Mountain Network (2007) that distance learning usually takes form of curriculum enrichment models and ongoing programmes at the elementary and middle school levels. Distance learning goes beyond curriculum enrichment due to the current transformation of distance education systems into online educational communities and now divided into theory, student psychology and motivation, administration and support, curriculum development, teaching materials and resources, institutional and staff (Stake, 2008).

The result from the null hypothesis tested at .05 level of significance showed that significance difference does not exist between mean perception responses of NTI – NCE students in Ebonyi State and those of their counterparts in Enugu State with regards to the usefulness of the NCE Certificate obtained from NTI, Kaduna.

This finding may be as a result of some factors such as that distance education has become paramount as an alternative method of course delivery being used by College and Universities as they expand access to higher education at both the national and international levels. It has been observed that distance learning is increasingly being looked to by many institutions as an economical way of expanding their activities,

### ***Perceptions of the...***

---

widening opportunities for students around the world, and making effective use of the new technologies, which are rapidly emerging.

This has also been found to be inline with UNESCO(2006), which had stated that “in efforts to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, open and distance learning may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstances, as appropriate substitute for the face-to-face methods that will still dominate most educational systems” (p.44).

Many stakeholders in the education sector are interested in the open and distance learning scheme because it allows greater access to educational opportunities. This is in keeping with the stated objectives, of the National Policy on Education (NPE)(revised in 2013) that “maximum efforts shall be made to enable those that can benefit from higher education to be given access to it”.

It has been observed that such access may be through Universities or Correspondence Courses, or open universities like the National Open Universities (NOUN) or part – time and work-study programmes like the “Mature Students Programmes (MSP) of Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, for example, or the various Sandwich Programmes of Institutes and Faculties which, in one way or the other, uplifted and upskilled people, especially, primary school teachers to higher levels of education while on-the-job.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study show that the NTI – NCE Students in Ebonyi State and their counterparts in Enugu State indicate that the NCE Certificate obtained through NTI, Kaduna, distance education is useful, irrespective of discriminatory attitude of some states against holders of the NTI – NCE Certificate in the recruitment of teachers.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Certificates obtained from the NTI Programmes should be recognized by all sectors of employers.
2. NTI – NCE Certificate should also be accepted for further studies
3. More and more unqualified primary school teachers should be upgraded through open and distance education institutions.

### **References**

- Clifford, R. (2010). *Foreign Languages and distance education*. London: Longman.
- Gatta, M. (2013). *Communications technology in distance education*. London: Longman.

*Academic Excellence*

---

- Hasemtpug, M.O. & Harnish, D. (2008). College teaching. In P.L. Peterson & H.J. Walberg (2002) (Eds.). *Research on teaching concepts*. Berkeley, California: McCutcheon.
- Lewis, J. (2008). *Situated Learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- National Policy on Education. (2013). *Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Abuja: NERD C Press.
- National Policy on Education. (2013). *Federal Republic of Nigeria*. Abuja: NERD C.
- Pacific Mountain Network (2007). *Issues in distance learning*. New York: Praeger.
- Pacific Mountain Network. (2011), *Issues in distance Learning*. New York: Praeger.
- Sherny, L. & Norse, R. A. (2009). An assessment of training needs in the use of distance education for instruction. *International journal of telecommunications, I (1)*, 5 – 22.
- Stake, M. (2008). *Information technology*. Cambridge: Praeger.
- Tetas Workforce Commission. (2011). *Guidelines for distance education*. Tetas: Author.
- UNESCO. (2006). *Open and distance Learning: Trends, policy and strategy consideration*. Paris: Author.
- UNESCO. (2012). *The Dakar framework for action: Education for All: Meeting Consideration*. Paris: Author.
- Williams, S. & Shama, R (2008). In W.B. Sheets (1992). *Ways of teaching at distance, London: Longman*.