

**FACTORS INFLUENCING PROGRESSION OF ADULT LEARNERS IN
DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A
CASE OF NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

This research Project report is my original work and has not been submitted for an award in this or any other institution.

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DEDICATION

This research project report is dedicated to my husband, Stephen Momanyi, my children; Nancy, Dominic, Darius and Deborah, who have been my pillars and source of inspiration.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BOC: British Open University

CU: Colombian University

DL: Distance Learning

FPE: Free primary Education

GOK: Government of Kenya

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IDU: International Data Corporation

LSS: Learners Support Services

ODL: Open Distance Learning

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UNESCO: United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UON: University of Nairobi

ABSTRACT

The ever increasing demand for university education in Kenya has overstretched to maximum that the available facilities and resources of many public universities cannot be able to accommodate. With the continued desire for higher education, many public universities in Kenya have resort to the introduction of distance learning programs to satisfy the ever growing demand for education. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors influencing the progression of adult learners in distance learning programs in the public universities in Nyamira County. The objectives of this study sought to establish factors that influence adult learners progression in distance learning programs in public universities, It also sought to find out the contribution of technology, cost of education, access to learning resources and learners support services influence in the progression of adult learners in distance learning in the public universities. This research project drew upon secondary data sources that includes; existing research studies, reports and evaluations commissioned by the ministry of education and external studies in Kenya. The primary data source complemented the study through Questionnaires, interviews and key informants method among adult learners in Nyamira County. This study employed descriptive survey as it was concerned with finding out the factors influencing progression of adult learners into distance learning program. The sample size for the study was 200 respondents. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed to collect relevant data. Data was collected using semi structured questionnaires and was analyzed using frequency, statistical means and percentages. The study found out that technology, accessibility to learning materials, cost of education and learners support services greatly influenced progression of adult learners to distance learning. However there was need to address inadequacy of computer skills, hidden cost of distance learning that impact progression of adult learners, untimely placement of materials into the online portal for students to access and inadequate student support services. The study recommended that public universities to invest more on ict infrastructure, to explore more options mostly in technology for delivering instructional materials, learning materials to be provided in time also the government should recognize distance learning and develop a policy to ensure proper funding is accorded to the public institutions offering distance learning.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Public universities are facing a tremendous challenge world over due to the increasing demand and desire for higher education, Philip & Patti (1999). Higher education is viewed as an indicator of human development, this is because it makes fundamental contributions and differences in an individual's ability to function and attain their potential in society besides improving the economy through innovation and skills, increasing discoveries and increasing social mobility and cohesion. Access to higher education is the most resourceful investment that can be made in Africa. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (1967) underpinned the importance of university education; He said "universities in developing nations contribute ideas, manpower and services for furtherance of human equality, dignity and development" Nyerere also argued that universities are fundamental medium for social revolution and should therefore stand for truth in order to liberate the society from ignorance (UNESCO, 2004).

Distance learning is a new phenomenon that has grown tremendously all over the world, most institutions worldwide are adapting to this mode of learning while many people are accepting online degrees. In the year 1997-1998 at least 34 % of institutions enrolled students for distance courses. Moore (2007) found that the annual market for distance learning was 4.5 billion in 2002 and it was expected to

grow to 11 billion by 2005. Romesh (2005) states that international data corporation (IDC) expect at least 30% growth rate progression in distance learning over the next coming years. Most institutions all over the world are adopting distance learning and accepting on line degree as equal to traditional on campus degree. Universities such as Dutch open universities, Colombian university, British Open University among others are offering online degrees and many students are enrolling to undertake these programmes. More countries are now focusing on distance education because distance learning is seen as important in terms of market oriented societies. These include Pakistan, Mexico Indonesia, India, Brazil and Bangladesh. Africa has not been left behind, In sub-Sahara region, distance learning has widened access for basic education, for instance in the 1960s and 1970s distance learning was used to train unqualified teachers UNESCO (2000), in south Africa projects for distance learning known as the Soma teachers development (using satellite and TV) were used to train teachers and other interested people in furthering their education through this mode of education, Aggarwal(2004), whereas the rest of African countries are following suit due to tremendous growth and expansion of information technology infrastructure.

Distance learning in Kenya was introduced in early 1966 when the board of adult education was established by an act of parliament. The commission of Education under the chairmanship of Prof. Ominde established an advisory committee on Open and distance learning to advise the government on distance learning. The

commission proposed to the government of Kenya to introduce basic distance learning to be implemented by the ministry of Education in order to meet high demand for trained and qualified teachers. The commission further recommended for an establishment of correspondent courses at the institute of Adult Studies based at the University College of Nairobi.

The report of the Kenya Educational commission came at a time when the need and demand of degree courses was high when distance teaching methods were being identified; Student Handbook (2011-2012). The pressure to find external degree studies was further aggravated by the rapid population growth, especially the increasing number of Harambee Secondary schools which produced more students demanding higher education and who met university requirements but could not be absorbed by the only University in the country, Odumbe (1995). Gachachi Commission (1976) was established to develop a framework on the development and implementation of distance learning in the institution of higher learning, the commission emphasized the need for solving educational problems in large scale by diversifying education to include distance learning. The Mackay commission (1981) recommended that the college of adult and distance education be restructured and its capacity expanded to adopt a more cost ó effective method of offering education in Kenya, Republic of Kenya, (1981), while the Mungai report recommended for the establishment of an open university in Kenya similar to that in Britain, Dutch and Hong Kong. The report further stated that distance learning should be considered as a way of extending university education. These

and Many others commissions including Koech report (1999) supported external degree programmes as beneficial not only to teachers but also to other Kenyans in employment who would otherwise not have the opportunity to enrolled for University education on full-time basis. Koech recommended the expansion of external programmes in order to meet the rising demand of many deserving and qualified Kenyans who were otherwise barred from public University entry owing to rigid admission criteria, Republic of Kenya (1999).

Open and distance learning has gained momentum with time and recently the sessional paper No.1 of 2005 made important recommendations for the establishment of an open university in Kenya. It's therefore worth noting that Kenya occupies a significant place in the world academic cycles as supporting and using Open and distance learning to build capacity and equip its citizens with knowledge relevant for development. It's in this spirit that Kenya participates in supporting southern African universities to establishing Open and distance learning programmes. Public universities in Kenya have stringent criteria for selecting students to join regular programmes. Many students are locked out of the regular traditional systems of the local public universities however with the recent revolution in information technology access to higher education has significantly changed this is because of the introduction of the alternative method of learning via Distance learning, Keegan (1990). This form of learning has a number of advantages compared to all other learning methods this advantages include; virtual access to teaching staff in higher institutions around the country

and the world, quick and easy enrolment via internet without leaving home, introduction to new alternative interactive techniques and availability of learning material. Because of its many advantages, distance learning has been identified by educators, scholars, academicians, and researchers as one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of learning in Kenya and Africa in General.

Information communication technology plays a salient role in work places, education, business and entertainment. It is perceived as a catalyst especially in teaching methods, learning approaches, social and scientific research, Watson (2005). Public universities have invested a lot in ICT infrastructure with the aim of promoting research and development and aiding distance learners to access university programmes. Students use computers more often and for a much larger range of applications, Volman (2005). Several studies indicate that students using ICT facilities mostly show higher learning gains than those who do not use. Findings of the study done in the United States indicated that students who used tutorial in Mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences scored higher, Kulik (1994).

Distance learning provides those who cannot or do not want to take part in classroom teaching in higher learning institutions, an opportunity to study and achieve success in their expectations, Holmberg (1995). Moore and Kearsley (2005) state that 80 percent of learners prefer traditional mode of study that is face to face, however this is not possible for everyone since some people (students) are

working, other have families to care while some cannot not afford full time mode of study due to distance and cost of learning and operations. Distance learning therefore becomes a reliable mode of study for majority of these students. Distance learning in its earliest form was named open and distance learning. This meant learning by correspondence but as technology evolved distance learning was delivered in audio tapes, video tapes, radio and television, today distance learning has grown tremendously to the level its delivery is via internet, video conferencing, phones and virtual space. Some choose print media to deliver information and course work, this has led to more people enrolling to distance learning especially the adult learners since this medium enable them to maintain their jobs and families.

Distance learning has gained worldwide acknowledgement as an important factor in the contribution of knowledge growth and as a driving factor in the economy. It's therefore imperative that the Kenya Government takes an effort to invest a lot of resources to developing this module to help those student who are left out by public universities due to lack of space and beds, those students faced by challenges of fees and family issues as well as those working at various parts of the country but unable to attend full time classes. Despite the positive impact of distance learning, there are numerous challenges impacting the rolling out of distance learning to all parts of the county. This includes; inadequate resources allocated to the programmes, poor infrastructural development (ICT) which is a major hindrance since the programmes entirely dependent on ICT infrastructure,

absence of policy to guide the implementation and use of Distance learning in education and the general attitude and perception of the public on distance learning discourages growth and development of distance learning in many public universities.

Progression in distance learning in Nyamira County has been gaining momentum since 2005. Many students have graduated from the public universities through the distance learning programme. In the year 2007, 30 students graduated, 2008, 41 students graduated and the year 2009, 52 students graduated (Nyamira County education office 2012 data)

1.2 Statement of the problem

Public universities in Kenya are overwhelmed by the continuous demands for higher education. These demands are occasioned by the introduction of free primary and secondary education by the Government. Due to free primary and secondary education, there has been an increase in the number of students who attain university entry points but due to their large numbers, the universities are unable to accommodate all this students as a result, many students are denied entry into university regular programmes because of this fact. Public universities are increasingly introducing open and distance learning programmes to help students denied entry into regular programmes an opportunity to attain their dreams of acquiring knowledge and professionalism. It is also noted that government has continuously reduced its support of university education. This is

evident in the continuous reduction of the Government recurrent expenditure on higher education. It is estimated that in the year between the 1980s through 1990s, the government reduced its recurrent expenditure on higher learning to below 45% as a result it became difficult for the public universities to expand the available structures in order to accommodate the rising number of students. Distance learning was therefore introduced to relieve the government the responsibility of developing infrastructure to accommodate the rising demand for higher education in public universities. Distance learning provided flexible mode of learning that could cushion the rising demand for higher learning in public universities. Since then distance learning has revolutionized access to university education. Public universities have introduced customized distance learning programmes with student support facilities to a wider audience of students; this helps those students experiencing social economic challenges to access higher education cheaply besides helping those students qualified to attend university programmes but denied entry due to stringent regulations. Also due to economic viability of distance learning, many adult and elderly people are going back to class to further their education and acquire better skills, knowledge and competence. The study therefore sought to find out factors that influenced the progression of adult learners in distance learning in public universities in Nyamira County.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing progression of adult learners in distance learning programmes in the public universities.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- i. To determine the influence of technology in the progression of adult learners in distance learning in public universities in Nyamira County.
- ii. To establish the extent to which access to learning materials influence progression of adult learners in distance learning in public universities.
- iii. To establish the extent to which cost of education influence the progression of adult learners in distance learning in public universities.
- iv. To establish the extent in which learner support services influence the progression of adult learners into Distance learning programmes.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions sought to find out the factors that influence progression of adult learners in distance learning in public universities:

- i. How does technology influence progression of adult learners in distance learning programmes in Kenyan public universities?
- ii. To what extent does accessibility to leaning materials influence progression in distance learning in public universities?

- iii. How does cost of education influence progression of adult learners in distance learning?
- iv. How does availability of learner's support services influence progression of adult learning programmes?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research paper sought to unearth some of the factors that influence adult learners from Nyamira County to progress in distance learning programmes in public universities. The research findings provided important information to Universities, the government, parents and other stakeholders who utilize this information to improve accessibility into distance learning in Kenya not only for adult learners but also to all students seeking higher education. This information is also useful to the stakeholders and education planners in designing customized and more effective strategies to promote and ensure quality of distance learning programmes offered by public Universities in Kenya, in addition the findings will help parents and prospective learners to make informed decisions in their choices of the mode of study since they had the knowledge on various factors that influence progression in distance learning and challenges that influences the choice of the mode of study. The research findings forms the basis for further research on this topic.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study faced limitations of scarce financial and time constraints owing to heterogeneous population of adult learners and their geographical locations compounded by the poor road network in Nyamira County. Sampling was subjected to errors as some respondents were un-co-operative and gave incorrect information due to the general perception of distance learning. Some respondents were also unwilling to participate or respond due to stigma associated with the subject matter as the locals referred to Distance learning as "Gumbaro". It was also difficult to control the respondents' attitudes as they responded to questions and therefore the researcher could personally encourage and persuade the respondents who gave the information by assuring them of confidentiality.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted in Nyamira County which comprises of four sub-counties namely; West Mugirango sub-county, Kitutu Masaba sub-county, North Mugirango sub county and Borabu sub-county. Each sub county is divided into ward administrative units within them. Owing to the vastness of the region, rough terrain and the poor road network, the researcher sub divided the county into the four administrative units (sub-county) for convenience of data collection.

1.9 Basic Assumptions of the study

Distance learning continues to attract many students as the demand for higher education in Nyamira County and Kenya in general continues to rise against the resources for residential mode of learning which does not expand as fast to accommodate the demands for higher education. Public universities have the capacity to provide Distance learning programmes to majority of learners including adult learners and all those who may not access residential mode of learning. The research findings reflected the situation in the public universities concerning adult progression in distance learning programmes. It was also assumed that the respondents cooperated with the researcher and gave correct information regarding the area of study.

1.10 Definition of Terms as used in the Study:

Progression: number of enrolled students continuing their studies on distance programme.

Distance education: Refers to a medium of delivering instructions whereby the learners are separated from the teacher in space, pace, time and environment and that learning is facilitated by print, electronic and other mechanical devices.

Adult learners: is a person who is 18 years and above who is involved in a certain form of learning.

Learners support services: the services provided to the distance learners

Cost of Education: the amount of money paid by learner for either tuition, reading materials, travel and other expenses concerning learning.

Influence: To cause effect or change of something.

Institution: Center of learning where various study programmes are undertaken.

Programme: Planned learning, teaching and training.

University: An institution of higher learning.

1.11 Organization of the Study.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one includes introduction which comprises the background of the study; statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, limitations of the study, delimitation of the study, basic assumptions of the study, significant terms and the organization of the study. Chapters two focuses on literature review and relevant research associated with the problem addressed in this study.

Chapter three deals with research methodology which included research design, target population, sample frame, sampling technique, sampling size, data collection tools, data collection procedure, validity of research instruments, reliability of research instruments, data analysis. Chapter four covers data analysis, interpretation and presentation and a summary, Chapter five comprises of summary, discussion, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research and summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter dealt with the analysis and discussions of the literature. The purpose of the analysis and discussion of the literature was to get a deeper understanding of the factors influencing adult progression in distance learning from a general perspective. Various factors influencing progression in distance learning was examined to show how they affect distance learners in general. Overall this section examined scholarly journals, research studies and articles that addressed the influence of technology, learning environment and social-economic factors and learners support services on distance students in order to established their strengths, weaknesses and research gaps in relation to the study.

2.2 Progression of adult learners into distance learning education.

According to McIsaac and Gunawardena (2001), distance education can be defined as a form of

Structured learning in which the student and instructor are separated by time and space. This definition was improved by UNESCO (2006) who defined distance education as an approach that focuses on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. This study

defines Distance Education as teaching and learning situations that occurs where the learner and the lecturer are separated from one another most of the time and therefore have to use a variety of strategies and study methods to overcome space and time separation. Holneberg (2005) noted that distant learning programme is expanding in the field of learning. Aggrawal (2007) said that through technology, distant learning is growing with the help of technological advancement. Distant learning has been accepted as a mode of learning globally. In South Africa it is no exception there is a growing need to take up distant learning through a programmer called Soma Teachers Development which use satellites and TV to educate distant learners. In Kenya many of the institutions of higher learning have embraced distant learning this include the University of Nairobi. Traditional modules for delivering education have had a limiting effect in enabling many people Constrained by work, family, age and location to attend regular classes in the institutions of higher learning. This has led to those keen on enhancing their capabilities and acquiring more knowledge and skills through education to seek alternatives. As documented by Race (1994), Usun (2004). Distance education has gained popularity as the alternative way of ensuring that the growing demands for education and training is met. It has been documented that the number of students enrolling in distance education and that of universities offering distance education has been on the rise, Distance learning- Middlehurst and Woodfield (2004). This rapid growth appears to be a fulfillment of some of the main objectives of distance education.

According to UNESCO (2006), some of the objectives of distance education which have contributed to the success and expansion of distance education include; the need to ensure lifelong education by multiplying entry points to learning and training opportunities, Provision of increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment for learners. Improving cost effectiveness of education resources, enhancing the quality of existing educational services. Extending geographical access to education and balancing inequalities between age groups. Providing speedy and efficient training for key target groups and utilizing technological advances to teach more subjects at a distance.

2.3 Influence of technology on adult learners progression in distance learning programs

The use of ICT in a distance learning environment suggests that ICT has played and continues to play a significant role in this field. This was especially true as the proliferation of ICT, other Internet technologies, and computer technology evolve. This prolific and rapid evolution has been acknowledged by distance learning professionals and institutions alike as an opportunity to conduct virtual class settings and deliver course materials through computer networks. Both synchronous networks such as videoconferencing and asynchronous networks such as e-mail, discussion rooms are used in distance learning. These are some of the milestones that influence the adult learners to prefer distance learning to face to face learning. Distances learning according to Poon et al. (2004), developing

countries still lack the technological factors necessary to implement distance learning systems, especially since the IT infrastructures in these countries not yet established in comparison to those of developed nations. The efficient and effective use of information technology in delivering distance learning based components of an online course is not only critical to student's acceptance of distance learning, it is also important to the success of student learning, Volman (2005). Information technology tools include network bandwidth, network security, network accessibility, audio and video plug-ins, courseware authoring applications, Internet availability, instructional multimedia services, videoconferencing, course management systems, and user interface. Therefore, the success of the distance learning model is necessarily related to a university's wise and careful investment in its information technology infrastructure, Brosnan (2001). This requires having a robust, rich, and reliable IT infrastructure that is capable of providing the courses with the necessary tools to make the delivery process as smooth as possible.

2.4. Accessing learning materials

Sachand (2002) notes that distance learner's access to reading materials in different ways. They use variety of means such as printed material, manuals mediated by technology using different kinds of media e.g. Radio, internet, telephone etc. In order to access learning material directly, the same must be reliable, available, user friendly, portable and efficient in order offer efficient

service. Conrad (2002) examined how distance learners' experience in the first class of distance course and how it affects their preparation and engagement in distance learning. In this study, survey data was obtained from twenty-eight distance students. The majority of the students preferred access to the course site at least two weeks prior to the course start date. The reasons students gave for such preferences included, a feeling of comfort and familiarity (i.e., lowered anxiety), checking for completeness and getting prepared and integrating this new learning experience into their lives. However, the students did not expect to interact socially with the instructor and students during the preview period. They reported that their comfort level with course materials as well as the associated course-related processes was more important than interactions with peers during this early period. The students were more satisfied when the course provided the necessary information and was presented in an organized manner.

Kavulya (2004) in his study said that most Kenyan students have little or no exposure to library use and this affects the way they access reading materials and study on their own. In Nigeria since libraries do not have relevant materials. Most students may not be able to locate the relevant materials to read in the library. Oloajo and Akewukere (2004) studied students in university of Ibadan and reported that most students were not able to locate reading materials in the library and this affected their learning outcomes. Library services are very important to distance learners.

Researchers in distance learning agree that library services are key to distance learners, Casperø, Fritts and Gover (2001), Students working independently must have study habits which would enable them achieve their goals. Azikiwe (1998) noted that the way students study can adversely influence a distance learning outcomes. Thus time for reading may not be there, skills for using computers may be there, skills for using computers may be minimal and this also will contribute negatively to studentø access to reading materials. Most students especially those in rural set up may not have access to reliable telecommunications such as computers, emails, etc. This leads to frustrations which bring about problems between the students and institutions. Isolation from other students is another factor influencing progression and completion whereby the students would exchange reading materials to help one another. Lack of training on use of computers would be a barrier in accessing learning resources, thus such students may drop out due to lack of survival skills, Woo (1996). Thus students taking distance learning must undergo some fundamental training on use of computers to help access to materials from the internet.

2.5. Cost of Education.

Siemens (2008) notes that when learners join together in a learning community that is when learning start, bearing in mind the knowledge that is in worldwide, it is important for distance learners to get knowledge and information from valid sources. Distance learning has its own cost to run that kind of learning, while we

say that a learner is separated by time, distance and space there is need for access to materials for learning, use of internet and digital gadgets, travelling expenses as well as materials to write on assignments and modules. However, distance learning is able to deal with large number of learners in a cost effective manner. Distance education therefore has far more on economics of scale. Romesh (2005) noted that distance learning is attractive in most countries since it is said to increase access and at the same time cost effective that is lower average cost per students. Most adult students progressing with distance learning choose this mode because they are already constrained with challenges of life hence lack enough resources to enroll in regular classroom studies as opposed to distance learning. Thus distance learning module is relatively cheap as compared to regular module. In addition the distance learning cost is minimized by the use of technology as students could easily and readily access lecturer's notes, course outline and online texts books compared and learn at their own pace as per the schedules of their own.

2.6. Learner Support Services

Institutions with distance learning need support services which play a major role in the expansion of distance learning systems across the globe. Gunawardena (1992) defines learner support as the resources that learners can access in order to carry out the learning process. These are learning materials, library, teacher/facilitator, and resources. He observes that in distance education support is

concerned with a range of human and resources to guide and facilitate the education transaction. In most instructional services the most important support is the teacher who guides and directs, as well as assists the student to achieve their goals and develop control of the education system. Nonyongo and Ngegebule (1998) noted that the support services differ in institutions and these can be put into two categories one being academic- which includes as tutorial, advising, and counseling services. The other is administrative functions, such as enrolment, admission and registration, record keeping, information provision and delivery of study materials. Distance students need access to academic advisory services. This can be done through email or telephone. Gurawadena (1992) says that a model of a learner centered distance education system can be facilitated by the use of interactive communications technology. Learners are connected with other learners, both on and off campus and the library database. The tutor acts as a facilitator to connect learners to other learners. Learners are also taught to link up with other learners using networking. Learners should also be taught skills such as cognitive strategies and self-directed learning skills in order to be capable of taking charge of their learning experiences.

Tait and Mills (2003) observed that some factors hindered the full participation of distance learners in the interactive courses. These are: instructor's negative attitude toward off- campus students, lack of instructor contract, lack of feedback from instructor and poor distribution materials. Learners need to control their learning environment and the activities they undertake while social interaction

and feedback are very important. Since distance learning isolates learners from teaching institutions, it also deprives them from peers. This may at time bring loneliness and confusion, anxiety as well as stress and sometimes attrition, Nonyongo and Ngegebule (1998). Therefore it is important for distance learners to be supported to enable them cope with challenges of isolation and infrequent contact with their learning facilitators and fellow students. Somayajulu (2002) in a study in Indira Gandhi National University in New Delhi found out that learners needed quality support services to meet their academic requirements in time. Learners also seek more technical support in meeting their requirements in distance learning for their academic achievements. All distance learners need learner support services. The institutions should recognize the basic needs of the learner and try to fulfill them to the best of their abilities.

2.7. Theoretical framework;

The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem under study exists. In this case the theory of independent study introduced by Moore (1973) was used

2.8. The Theory of Independent Study

This theory is an important foundation of distance education; it suggests that successful teaching can take place even though teacher and learner are physically separated during the learning process. For Moore (2001), distance education is composed of two elements, each of which can be measured. The first element is the provision for two-way communication (dialogue); some systems or programmes offer greater amounts of two-way communication than others. The second element is the extent to which a programme is responsive to the needs of the individual learner (structure); some programmes are very structured while others are more responsive to the needs and goals of the individual student. In the second part of his theory, Moore addresses learner autonomy. He notes that in traditional school settings learners are very dependent on teachers for guidance and that in most programmes, conventional and distance, the teacher is active while the student is passive. In distance education, there is a gap between teacher and student, so the student must accept a high degree of responsibility for the conduct of the learning programme. The autonomous learner needs little help from the teacher, who may be more of a respondent than a director. Some adult learners, however, require help in formulating their learning objectives, identifying sources of information, and measuring objectives, Moore (1972). The theory has been used in the current study since it promotes and enhances the independence of the student as the essence of distance education. This was reflected in Wedemeyer's preference for the term "independent study" for

distance education at the college or university level. He was critical of contemporary patterns of higher education, believing that outdated concepts of learning and teaching were being employed. Wedemeyer felt that these concepts failed to utilize modern technologies in ways that could alter an institution. Therefore the system is capable of operating in any place where there are students even only one student

whether or not there are teachers at the same place, at the same time, places greater responsibility for learning on the student, free faculty members from custodial type duties so that more time can be given to truly educational tasks and offering students and adults wider choices (more opportunities) in courses, formats, and methodologies. This paper further utilizes this theory to mix and combine media and methods so that each subject or unit within a subject is taught in the best way possible, cause the redesign and development of courses to fit into an articulated media programme, preserve and enhance opportunities for adaptation to individual differences, evaluate student achievement simply, not by raising barriers regarding the place, rate, method, or sequence of student study; and permit students to start, stop, and learn at their own pace.

2.9. Conceptual framework

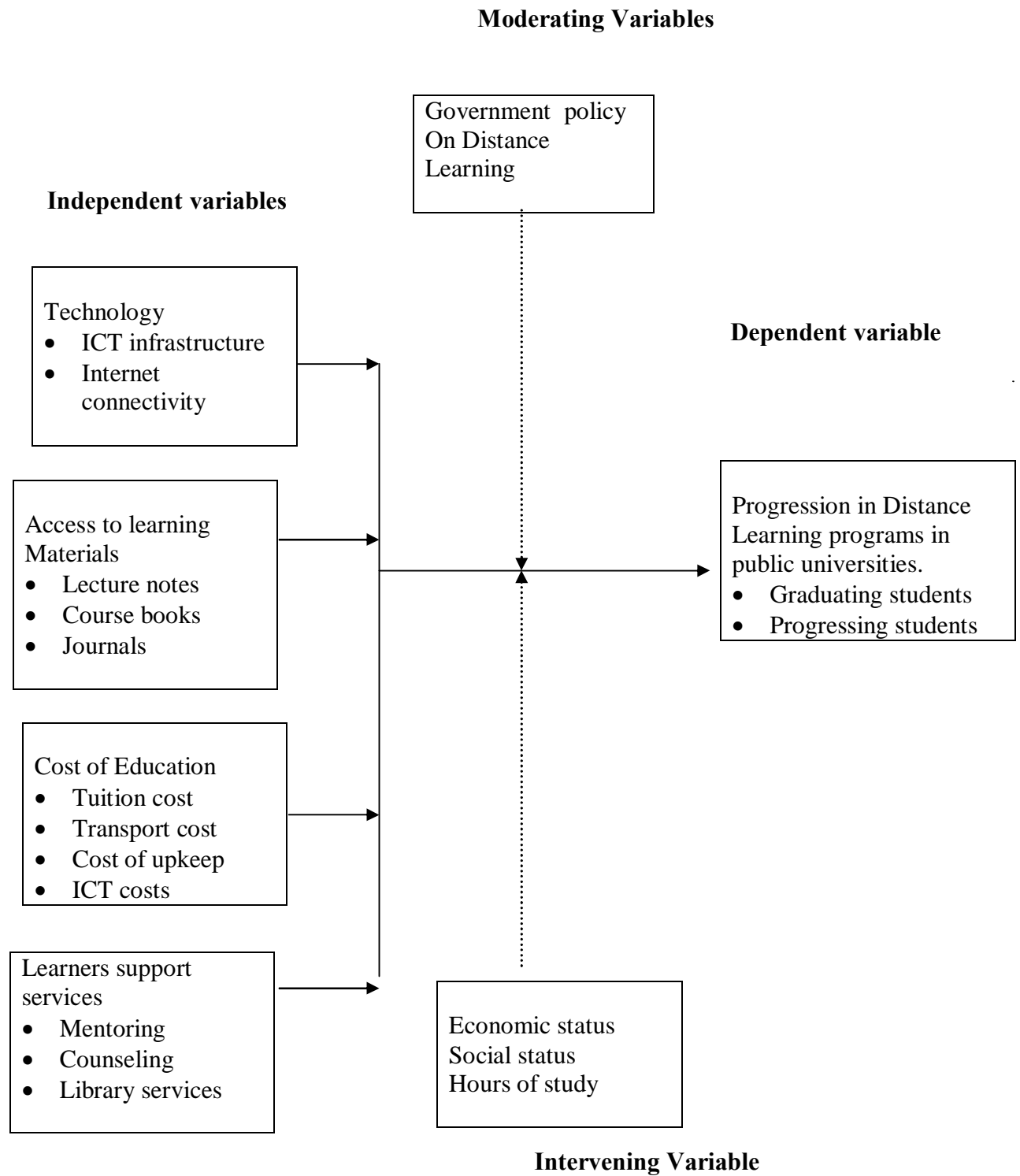


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework suggests that technological factors, cost of education, learners support and access to learning materials influence distance learning. All these factors were identified as some of the factors that influence distance learning. However even in the relationship of the two variables there is intervening variables namely; economic status, social status and hours of study which play apart in influencing the link between independent and dependent variables and so is the Government Open and distance learning education policy.

2.10 Summary and research gaps

The literature reviewed has touched on open and distance learning, distance education in various countries and the growth of distance learning in modern societies as well as factors influencing growth of distance learning. However certain gaps exist in these studies. Few studies have emphasized on the progression of adult learners in distance learning programs in public universities. This study seeks to explore and find out those factors that influence progression of adult learners into distance learning programs in public universities in Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Kothari (2004) noted that methodology is the theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. This chapter presents the procedures that were used to conduct the study, focusing on research design, target population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, and data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized descriptive survey research design to study the factors influencing the progression of adult learners into distance learning in public universities in Kenya. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a survey research design attempts to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of the population with respect to one or more variables. There are four types of research designs namely; cross-sectional design, longitudinal design, case study design and descriptive design, this study employed research design. Descriptive statistics utilized data collection and analysis techniques that yielded reports concerning the measures of central tendency, variation and correlation. The combination of its characteristic summary and correlational statistics, along with its focus on specific types of research questions, methods and outcomes distinguish descriptive research from

other research types. Descriptive research design was used where the researcher collected data and reported the way things were without manipulating any variables besides being less time consuming and able to capture a lot of data within the contained time and resources.

3.3 Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), describes target population as the totality of cases of people, organization or institutions, which pose certain characteristics. Further asserts that target population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. The target population for this study was; adult students progressing with distance learning, educationist and graduates from distance learning in Nyamira County. Progressing students, educationist and graduates were chosen since they were involved in the day to day activities of distance learning.

Table 3.1. Target Population

Category	Target Population
Progressing students	34
Educationist	34
graduates	132
Total	200

Source: Nyamira County Office (Statistics, 2014)

3.4 Sampling Frame

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a sample frame is a set of elements used to identify a sample population for statistical treatment. A sampling frame includes a numerical identifier for each individual, plus other identifying information about characteristics of the individuals, to aid in analysis and allow for division into further frames for more in-depth analysis. Kothari (2004) also notes that the sampling frame must be representative of the population and this is a question outside the scope of statistical theory demanding the judgment of experts in the particular subject matter being studied. A good sample frame includes all individuals in the target population, excludes all individuals not in the target population and includes accurate information that can be used to contact selected individuals.

3.5. Sampling Technique

This research paper used stratified random sampling technique to select the respondents and this involved dividing population into homogenous subgroups and then taking a sample in each subgroup. The sample was selected so as to ensure that certain subgroups in the population are represented in the sample in proportion to their number in population. The researcher considered this technique appropriate because every member of the population had an equal chance of inclusion and reduces the biasness.

3.6. Sample Size

Kull (1984) noted that sampling is the process by which a relative small number of individual object or event is selected and analyzed in order to find out surrounding about the entire population from which was selected using some systematic form. Since the overall population is heterogeneous, stratified random sampling was used in the study to select the respondents. Yamane (1967) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes. This formula was used to calculate the sample sizes as shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where **n** is the sample size, **N** is the population size, and **e** is the level of precision or margin of error at 5% (standard value of 0.05). When this formula is applied to the above sample, we get;

$$n = \frac{200}{1+200(0.05)^2} = 134$$

The **Table 3.2** shows sample size representing 67% of target population in which sampling technique was used to group the target population into homogeneous strata. The percentage of the sample size was as illustrated here.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Percentage of the sample size} &= \frac{\text{Sample Size}}{\text{Target Population}} * 100\% \\ &= \frac{134}{200} * 100\% \\ &= 67\% \end{aligned}$$

Table 3.2: Sample Size

Category	Target Population	Sample Size
progressing students	34	23
educationist	34	23
graduates	132	88
Total	200	134

3.7. Data Collection Tools

The main tools of data collection for this study were structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were used for data collection because they offered considerable advantages in the administration. They also presented an even stimulus potential to a large numbers of people simultaneously and the investigation with an easy accumulation of data. Anonymity helps to produce more candid answers than is possible in an interview. The questionnaires comprised of close-ended questions, they also contained items covering all the objectives of the study.

3.8. Data Collection Procedure

To carry out the study, I sought permission and authority from the University of Nairobi. I was offered a letter of authorization from the school of continuing and distance learning, University of Nairobi. The selected institutions with Distance learning programs were visited and the questionnaires administered. The

questionnaires were self-administered to the respondents. Each item in the questionnaire was developed to address specific objectives and research questions.

3.9. Validity of research instruments.

Before the actual data was collected, the researcher conducted a pilot study at Kisii County in the five open and Distance learning institutions. Validity is defined as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results, Mugenda & Mugenda (1999). The pilot study helped to improve face validity of the instruments. To properly evaluate the validity of the research, the researcher determined if information obtained from the analysis of the data was accurate and relevant to the topic. Some questions were formulated to capture all the variables as identified in the conceptual framework and ensure that the content logically got the intended purpose.

3.10. Reliability of research instruments.

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trial. To maintain the reliability, survey findings were analyzed and interpreted logically and sent back to the respondents for checking the distortion, Kothari (2004). Reliability of the research instrument was determined from the test items that were used during the pilot study.

Reliability also refers to the extent to which a test is internally consistent after testing and re-testing. Therefore the researcher applied split half method in

finding the reliability of the instrument. The split half method involved splitting the test into halves (odd items and even items). This was obtained through a pilot test that took care of reliability and validity. Statistics generated in the study was above the recommended coefficient of 0.7.

3.10.1 Data Analysis

According to Kothari (2004), data analysis procedure includes the process of packaging the collected information, putting in order and structuring its main components in a way that the findings can be easily and effectively communicated. After all data is collected, the researcher conducted data cleaning, which involves identification of incomplete responses, which was corrected to improve the quality of the responses. Data collected from the field was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved the use of frequency, means, Tables and percentages. Inferential statistics involved the use of regression analysis to assess the strength and association of the variables in the study.

The results of the study were tested at 95% confidence level. The five point Likert Scale was used to assess aspects of variable in the study. This research yielded both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed qualitatively using content analysis and implications emanating from respondent's information and documented data. On the other hand, quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

3.11 Ethical consideration

Berg (2005) highlights ethical concerns that ought to be adhered to before embarking on research. The same principle was adhered to by this study. The principles were, getting consent from all respondents before handing over the questionnaire or interview schedules. The identity of people from whom information was obtained in the course of the study was kept strictly confidential. The nature and purpose of the research was explained to the respondents by the researcher. The participants were assured of anonymity; and their ability to withdraw from the study at will, was also assured.

3.12 Operational definition of variables

The table presents the operational definition of variables based on both the independent and dependent variables. The table is divided into objectives, variables, indicators, measurements for getting scores from the objectives, measuring scales and data analysis.

Table 3.1 Operational Definition of Variables

Objectives	Variables	Indicators	Measurement	Scale	Data analysis
To determine the influence of technology on the progression of adult learners into distance learning in public Universities	Technology	ICT infrastructure, Internet connectivity,	Availability of ICT infrastructure, I Availability of internet.	Ordinal	Descriptive statistics
To establish the extent to which access to learning materials influence progression of adult learners into distance learning in public universities	Access to learning Materials	Lecture notes, course books, Journals etc.	Online accessibility of lecture notes, course books and journals	Nominal	Descriptive statistics
To establish the extent to which cost of education factors influence the progression of adult learners into public universities	Social economic factors	Tuition cost, Transport cost, Cost of upkeep, ICT costs	Cost of transport, Tuition cost, Cost of ICT services and upkeep.	Ordinal	Descriptive statistics
To establish the extent to which learners support services influence the progression of adult learners into distance learning.	Learnerø support services	Mentoring, Counseling, Library services, ICT support services.	Availability of learnerø support services.	Ordinal	Descriptive statistics

3.13 Summary

This chapter part presented the research methodology and procedures used for data collection and analysis. It specifically dealt with research design that utilized a descriptive survey research design, target population of 200 progressing students, educationists and graduates who were later sampled to 134 using Yamane (1967) sample size calculation table and data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Reliability was tested using split half

method while validity was calculated using experts in the field. Data was then analyzed using SPSS software and presented it in tables.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the factors influencing progression of adult learners in distance learning programmes in public universities, in Kenya. Data was collected through administration of 80 questionnaires to the respondent who were continuing student progressing with distance learning programmes, graduate students and educationists. Data was also collected through interviews with Education officers in the County in charge of open and distance learning in the public universities and analysis of relevant documents on the programmes. The data collected were fed into appropriate computer worksheets using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) package and Microsoft Excel. The data was then analyzed based on research objectives in chapter one.

4.2 Response rate

A total of 80 questionnaires were administered, all questionnaires were returned fully filled, translating the questionnaire return rate to about 100%. Where $n=80$.

The distribution of Age of the respondents is as shown below:

4.3 Age distribution of the respondents

The first item of the study sought information on the respondents' age Bracket.

The information is indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Age distribution of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-30	16	20.0
30-40	45	56.3
Above 40	19	23.8
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.1, indicates that majority of the respondents progressing with distance learning were above 30 years. That is, 56% of respondents were 30 - 40 years old, followed by 20-30 years old with 20% and those above 40 years old represented by 23.8 %. Thus distance learning as a mode of learning is preferred by all the age groups who are seeking education for economic development and professionalism.

4.4 Distribution in relation to gender

The study sought information on the respondents' demographic information of the respondents. The information is indicated in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Genders representation of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
male	59	73.8
female	21	26.3
Total	80	100.0

The study found out that majority of distance learners in Nyamira County, were male as represented by 73.8 % while the female were represented by 26.3 %. This implies that distance learning is a mode of education that is mostly preferred by Male students.

4.5. Marital Status distribution of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their marital status. The information is indicated in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Distribution of Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
married	34	42.5
single	46	57.5
Total	80	100.0

It was found out that 42.5% of the respondents were married while 57.5 % were single. This means that distance learning is a preferred mode of study by both groups of people either married or not. This is because of its flexibility which allows them to study as they carry on other duties.

4.6. Distribution in regard to academic level.

The study sought to find out the highest academic level of the respondents.

The information is indicated Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Highest academic level

Highest Academic level	Frequency	Percent
Secondary	13	16.3
Degree	36	45.0
Masters	26	32.5
Doctorate	5	6.3
Total	80	100.0

The study found out that majority of the respondents were degree holders who were represented by 45% while at masterø level they were represented by 32.5%. 16.3 % were secondary students aspiring to join distance learning programmes. This implies that most students progressing with distance learning studies were undergraduates with masterø level gaining momentum.

4.7. Distribution of the Level of Studies of the respondents

The study sought information on the levels of study of the respondents. The information is indicated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Level of studies

Level of Study	Frequency	Percent
1 st yr.	3	3.8
2 nd yr.	14	17.5
3 rd yr.	23	28.8
4 th yr.	5	6.3
Graduate	35	43.8
Total	80	100.0

It was established that most of the respondents were graduates who were represented by 43.8 %, while 28.8% of the respondents were 3rd year students, 17.5 % were 2nd year students, 4th years were 6.5%. This implies that those who enrolled for distance learning at first year could not complete their studies due to economic and social constraints as well as family matters.

4.8. Influence of technology on Progression of adult learners in Distance learning

This study sought to find out the influence of technology on progression of adult learners in Distance learning. The information is indicated in Table 4.6

Table.4.6: Influence of Technology on progression of leaners in Distance learning.

Influence of technology	Frequency	Percent
Agree	43	53.8
Disagree	4	5.0
Strongly agree	32	40.0
Strongly disagree	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

53.8 % of the respondents agreed that technology influenced progression of learners in distance learning and strongly supported technology as an important

factor to distance learning. They argued that technology enabled adult learners progressing with distance learning to readily access learning materials, carry out research and undertake their assignments easily. However 5% were of the contrary opinion as they disagreed, arguing that technology hindered progression of learners to distance learning since it was complex and expensive especially internet connection. Technology also required individuals to be skilled in computer applications which sometimes were not uniform.

4.9. Influence of Accessibility to learning materials on progression of Adult learners in distance learning programmes.

The study sought to find out the effect of accessibility to learning materials on progression of adult learners with distance learning programs. The findings are indicated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Accessibility to learning Materials

Accessibility to learning Materials	Frequency	Percent
Agree	53	66.3
Disagree	7	8.8
strongly agree	19	23.8
strongly disagree	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.7 indicates that 66.3% of the respondents felt that accessibility to learning materials influenced progression of adult learners with distance learning programs in public universities. They strongly believed that accessibility of learning

material had an impact on distance learning. 8.8 % disagreed arguing that accessibility of learning materials does not impact distance learning.

The research sought to find out if distance learning materials are readily available to the students. 42.5 % of the respondents confirmed that distance learning materials are readily available online and can be accessed any time, while 38.8 % disagreed by arguing that despite the materials provided, they are not provided in time, They are placed too late when there need is over as shown below in Table 4.8

Table 4.8: Learning Materials are readily available.

Material readily Available	Frequency	Percent
Agree	34	42.5
Disagree	31	38.8
Strongly agree	9	11.3
Strongly disagree	5	6.3
Total	80	100.0

4.10: Cost of education influence on progression of Adult learners into distance learning.

The study sought to find out the effect of the cost of education on progression of adult learners with distance learning programs in public universities. The findings are indicated in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Cost of education influences progression of distance learners

Cost of Education	Frequency	Percent
Agree	30	37.5
Disagree	30	37.5
strongly agree	16	20.1
strongly disagree	4	5.0
Total	80	100.0

Table 4.9 indicates that 37.5 % of the respondents cited that the cost of education influences progression of learners into distance learning arguing that the cost of education is flexible an affordable. while 37.5 % were of the contrary opinion arguing that it is the relative costs of education that distance learners seeks to avoid in traditional studies and further indicated that distance learning has huge hidden costs that accumulatively are greater that the cost of traditional cost of learning.

Table 4.10: Cost education is relatively cheap

Cost of education relatively Cheap	Frequency	Percent
Agree	30	38.8
Disagree	30	37.5
Strongly agree	15	18.8
Strongly disagree	4	4.5
Total	80	100.0

The study sought to find out if the cost of education was relatively cheap in distance learning. 38.8% of the respondents agreed by arguing that they found it cheaper to progress their studies with distance learning. 37.5% of the respondents were of the contrary opinion. They argued that, the cost of distance education was directly proportional to traditional cost of education.

4.11: Learners Support services influence progression of Adult learners into distance learning.

The first item on the learner's support services questioned the respondents on the quality of curriculum delivery offered to them in the progression in distance learning programmes. The response was presented as shown in Table 4.11

Table 4.11 quality curriculum delivery

Quality of curriculum delivery	Frequency	Percent
Agree	33	41.3
Disagree	37	46.3
Strongly agree	9	11.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

41.3% cited that the quality of the curriculum delivered was high and competitive, while 46.3% disagreed by challenging the assumption. They argued as compared to the traditional method of teaching curriculum, the distance learning curriculum was abstract and shallow and lacked comprehensive coverage of the required syllabuses.

4.11.1: learners support services are adequate

The study sought to find out if the learners support services are adequate. The findings are in Table 4.11

Table 4.11: adequate support services

Adequacy of learners support services	Frequency	Percent
Agree	42	52.5
Disagree	26	32.5
Strongly agree	7	8.8
Strongly disagree	5	6.3
Total	80	100.0

52.5% of respondents cited that there were adequate support services provided. They argued that adequate support services influences progression of adult learners in distance learning. However 32.5% were of the contrary opinion arguing that, the support services offered were inadequate and irrelevant as pertains to progression in distance learning. They pointed out counseling services as a waste of time since these services were not improving the performance of the students. Besides most of the students were parents who did not need or utilize these services.

4.11.2: Learners support services influence the performance of distance learners

The respondents were required to respond to the question on whether learners support services influence performance. Their responses are indicated in Table 4.12

Table 4.12: learners support influence performance

Learners support influence on performance	Frequency	Percent
Agree	60	75.0
Disagree	9	11.3
Strongly agree	11	13.8
Total	80	100.0

The study found out as indicated in Table 4.12, that 75% of the respondents felt that the support adult learners receive during their progression with distance learning studies influenced their performance. These include; advisory,

counseling services, virtual library support, tutorø support and learning materials provided. However there were concerns that were raised from 11.3% respondents who were of the contrary view and felt that performance largely dependent on personal traits such as hard work, dedication and conducive environment. Support given was primarily to enhance conducive environment therefore does not whatsoever influence performance.

4.12. Summary of the Findings

This chapter has presented the findings of the study based on the research objectives. The response rate which was 100% has indicated the enthusiasm and curiosity of the respondents about Distance learning in Nyamira County. It is clear that progression of adult learners in Distance learning is dependent on and greatly influenced by Technology, Accessibility of learning materials, relatively cheap cost of education and the services offered to students of distance learning. Itø however noted that there are serious challengers that hinders progression of distance learning this include; lack of in computer applications skills hinders students from accessing digital material and library, irregular and unsystematic supply of learning materials, poor quality of learning materials, high cost of internet connections, hidden costs especially in the purchase of computers and computer accessories. Itø however noteworthy that Distance learning is preferred by majority in Nyamira County due to its relative cheap cost of education and

accessibility to a wider variety of students as opposed to traditional mode of study that restricts entrance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings, summarizes, concludes and makes recommendations to the factors influencing progression of adult learners with distance learning in public universities, in Nyamira County. The results obtained are in accordance to relevant information from respondents who filled the questionnaires and the summary is based on adult students, graduates and educationist who are undertaking or facilitating distance learning programme.

5.2 Summary of findings

This part discusses the research findings based on variables namely, Influence of technology on adult learners progression in distance learning programs, Influence of accessibility to learning materials on the progression of adult learners in distance learning, Influence of Cost of education in Progression in Distance learning and influence of Learners support services on progression of distance learning.

5.2.1. Influence of technology on adult learners progression in distance learning programs

The study sought to find out the influence of technology on adult learners progression in distance learning. From the findings majority of the respondents confirmed that technology influences adult learners progression in distance learning. They argued that technology enabled adult learners to readily access learning materials, carry out research, communicate and undertake their assignments easily. They further posted that technology contributed greatly to distance learning programmes especially through the use of e-mails, online student portals, online chat rooms and video conferencing as a medium to access learning materials and communication of students with their facilitators.

5.2.2. Influence of accessibility to learning materials on the progression of adult learners in distance learning

The study sought to find out how accessibility to learning materials influences progression to distance learning. From the findings majority confirmed that accessibility to learning materials greatly influenced progression in distance learning. However some respondents were dissatisfied with the inadequacy and inaccessibility to learning materials. They argued that provision of learning materials was untimely and irregular, materials provided were outdated and of low quality forcing students to incur extra expenses by purchasing new relevant study materials. This was also compounded by unavailability of ICT

infrastructure in some centers that necessitated the purchase of modems to enable student's access internet.

5.3.3. Influence of Cost of education in Progression in Distance learning

Based on the third objective on establishing the extent to which cost of education influence the progression of adult learners in public universities. Majority of the respondents agreed that cost of education influence progression in distance learning. They argued that Progression of Distance learning was influenced by the flexibility and affordability of distance learning programs. However some respondents disagreed arguing that progression with distance learning was discouraging due to hidden and extra costs incurred by students in traditional methods of study. Such costs include; Housing, books, travelling costs, out of home dining and high school fees.

5.2.4. Influence of Learners support services on progression of distance learning

The study sought to find out the influence of learners support services on progression of distance learning. The findings indicated that majority agreed as evidenced by one of the respondent's claims when interviewed that "support services offered tremendously improved our standards and ability of learning" These learners support services offered included; Mentoring, advice and counseling services, learning materials, digital library and facilitator's guide. However some disagreed arguing that learners support given was irrelevant and

untimely. Arguing that performance largely dependent on personal traits such as hard work, dedication and conducive environment. Support given was primarily to enhance conducive environment therefore does not whatsoever influence performance.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

This part discusses the research findings based on variables namely, technology, accessibility to learning material, cost of education and learner support services. The findings of the study were presented in Tables form of Percentages and mode. It was established that majority of the respondents associated with distance learning were males represented by 73.8% far more than female at 26.2%. It was also found out that 56.3% of the respondents were progressing with distance learning. Findings in this study reveal that technological innovation and its transformation, affordability and availability is an opportunity to provide much-needed education to all those students who cannot access traditional mode of learning. Aggrawal (2007) states that through technology distant learning is rapidly growing with the help of technological advancement. Respondents described learning experiences with profound statements that endorsed progression to Distance learning as an excellent strategy for fulfilling their dreams to acquire an education. Learning environment is believed to play a powerful role in learners' academic accomplishment, Jensen (2008). Indeed, experts in the field of brain research are convinced that an individual's physical and emotional well-

being is closely linked to the ability to think and to learn effectively. Students progressing with Distance learning in public universities take online distance courses offered at public universities in Kenya but reside in their rural home towns but attend to their classes or online studies regularly. This has been made possible with the availability of technology that has erased communication barriers. This is important especially this era of technology-enhanced learning and more recently networked learning, Steeples and Jones (2002).

Although majority of distance learners appreciate the accessibility of learning materials it was evident as some of the respondents argued that accessibility of the learning material was still a challenge due to the expenses involved. It's therefore imperative that public universities offering Distance learning should utilize diverse methods of delivery to access the students. According to Sachand (2002), distance learners access reading materials in different ways, they use a variety of means such as printed material, manuals mediated by technology using different kinds of media e.g. radio, internet, telephone among others to access learning materials. It's also important that these institutions develop a learner centered system to help facilitate interactive learning, Gurawadena (1992). These institutions should also provide a training of technological skills relevant to progression in distance learning during orientation to help students utilize technology in their studies effectively. This will help eliminate the problem distance learning students experience especially when accessing online library,

Kavulya (2004) since library services are key to progression in distances Learning.

The findings indicate that the cost of education greatly influences progression in distance learning. Romesh (2005) notes, distance learning is attractive in most countries since it's cost effective, that is lower average cost per students. Adult learning students progression with Distance learning choose this mode because they are already constrained with family responsibilities, employment and other duties hence limited resources and time are available for them, Gibson (1991). This mode is therefore is cheap, flexible and affordable for adult learner progressing with distance learning. It is however important to note that a section of the respondents were of the contrary opinion arguing that the cost of education has hidden costs that accumulatively surpass traditional learning therefore it's cost effectiveness is certain especially since students could print learning materials, access internet and travel to distance learning centers. Learners support services are by and large meaningful for the progression of distance learning since they provide the relevant resources for learning, Gunawardena (1992). Majority of the respondents confirmed that learner support services influences progression to distance learning. Respondents noted that, they prefer progressing with distance learning because of the respect accorded to them by their facilitators, as one respondent reported "the program is good because the lecturers are very understanding and encouraging." Research studies express similar outcomes; that well informed and effectively supported learners, flourish, progress and succeed

in their programs of study Owens (2002). Those with contrary opinion felt that learners support services offered were inadequate, untimely and irrelevant. They also observed other factors hindering learners support services such as; negative attitude of facilitators, poor feedback mechanism, poor and untimely distribution of materials, Tait and Mills (2003). It is therefore important that public institutions ensure that the learning environment is conducive, material for learning are adequate, relevant and timely provided and the support given by the facilitators should be geared towards improving the student progress, Nonyongo and Ngengebule (1998).

5.4 Conclusion of the Study

From the findings of the study, several conclusions were arrived at:

Progression of distance learning in our public universities is growing tremendously to accommodate a large number of learners in Kenya. This is evident in the way distance learning has taken advantage of the growing Technology and development of ICT infrastructure, improved accessibility to learning materials, the flexibility and affordability of the cost of education, and the provision of adequate learners support services. These factors are significant and are positively influencing progression of adult learners in Distance learning in Nyamira County.

5.5 Recommendation

It has been clearly observed that the key pillars of Distance learning are; Accessibility to learning materials Cost of education, learners support and technology.

- i. From the findings technology play pivotal role in the delivery and progress of distance learning. It's therefore imperative that Public universities should invest more on ICT infrastructure so as to provide accessibility to distance learning programs and to progressing students at their home towns or Counties. With accessible technology, progressing students will access higher quality education.
- ii. The public institution with distance learning should explore more options mostly in technology for delivering instructional materials to learners to avoid delay and ensure enough support for learners. The findings indicated that learning materials were inadequate and irregularly provided.
- iii. Learning materials should be provided in advance when the program starts to help progressing students with distance learning ample time to study. It's also recommended that the facilitators to provide relevant and quality materials to improve standards and quality of learning.
- iv. The Government should develop a policy to recognize distance learning and allocate funds to these programmes so that poor students who are

unable to access learning through traditional methods can enroll in Distance learning to acquire education.

- v. The government should ensure that learners support services are adequate and timely, professional and geared towards improving the quality of education.
- vi. To ensure quality learners support, the public universities should train and employ more distance learning instructors or facilitators who are specialized in the area of distance learning and understand the learners' characteristics so as to help learners in their studies and access to relevant learning materials.

5.6 Suggested areas of study and further research.

In an effort to fill in existing gaps more suggestions for further research to contribute to the body of knowledge, more needs to be done in the following areas;

- i. The factors that hinder enrollment of Distance learners into the competitive programs in Public Universities.
- ii. A study to be carried out to assess the impact of distance learning to the economy. This is important because most universities are competing to open satellite campuses to serve as open and distance learning centers.

5.7 Summary

Chapter five presented a summary of findings, discussion, conclusion and recommendations made. The findings indicate that technology has a great influence on progression of distance learning. Respondents posit that technology enables adult learners to readily access learning materials, carry out research, communicate and undertake their assignments easily. This chapter also discusses the findings on the accessibility of learners materials influence on progression of distance learning. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents confirmed. However some respondents were of the contrary opinion pointing out that accessibility of learning materials was hampered due to inadequacy and inaccessible caused by untimely provision of materials. The findings discussed also pointed out that the cost of education influences progress of adult learners into distance learning as well learners support services among others influenced the progression of adult learners into distance learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION LETTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI,
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION
P.O BOX 30197
NAIROBI.

Dear Respondent,

RE: PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

I am a post graduate student at the University of Nairobi carrying out research on the factors influencing progression of adult learners in Nyamira County into distance learning programmes in public universities. You were selected randomly to participate in this study, i therefore seek your permission to interview you or Fill the attached questionnaire to assist me to gather relevant information.

Provide accurate answers as possible to the best of your knowledge. The information gathered will be treated with uttermost confidentiality and will be for educational research only.

Your participation in the study will be highly appreciated.

Thanks

Yours Faithfully.

Jerusha Nyachwaya

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is aimed at gathering information to find out factors influencing adult learner's progression in distance learning programs in public universities. All information gathered will be treated with high confidentiality.

Your co-operation will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

Section A: Demographic characteristics

Answer by [or]

Answer the following questions below;

1) Indicate your age bracket?

(a) 18-20 [] (b) 20-30 [] (c) 30-40 [] (d) Above 40 []

2) Gender.

a) Male [] b) Female []

4) What is your level of studies?

a) 1st Year [] c) 3rd Year []

b) 2nd year [] d) 4th Year [] e) Not a Student []

3) Indicate the highest educational level you have attained.

a) Secondary [] (b) Degree [] (c) Masters [] (d) Doctorate []

4) Your marital status?

a) Married [] b) Single []

SECTION B:

Answer the following Questions on the **Likert Scale** by ticking where relevant box:

Key;

Strongly Agree	SA
Agree	A
Disagree	D
Strongly Disagree	SD

Given the key, tick or choose the right alternative that corresponds with your opinion as

Follows:

	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
	Technology				
1.	Technology influences progression of adult learners in Distance learning.				
2.	Learning materials are readily available on internet.				
3.	Multimedia technologies are widely used e.g. E-mails, Video Conferencing and online chat rooms.				
	Accessibility to learning Materials				
4.	Learning materials are readily available.				
5.	Materials provided to the distance learners help them in their course.				

	Cost of education				
6.	Cost of distance education is relatively cheap.				
7.	The cost of education affects the performance of distance learners.				
8.	Learners Support Services.				
9.	There is quality curriculum delivery.				
10.	Learners support services are adequate.				
11.	Learners support services influence the performance of distance learners.				
12.	Easy access to digital library.				
13.	Enough virtual space to accommodate many learners.				
14.	Study materials are cheaply and readily available.				
15.	Advisory and counseling services are offered.				

SECTION C: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Instructions

Please answer the following questions;

1. In your own opinion, does technology influence the progression of adult learners into distance learning programs in public universities?

- a) Yes [] b) No. []

2. Technology has influenced many students to progress in Distance learning programmes in Nyamira County.

- a) True []
- b. False []

3. Mention the types of media used in curriculum delivery.

.....
.....
.....

4. Describe the quality of the media used in curriculum delivery.

- a) Excellent []
- b) Very good []
- c) Fair []
- d) Poor []

5. Are the Distance learning Material readily available?

- a) Yes []
- b) No. []

6. How Helpful are the Materials offered for distance learning?

- a) Very Helpful. []
- (b) Helpful []
- (c) little Help []
- (d) No help []

7. What problems do you encounter in relation to learning Materials?

- a) No library in my home town []

- b) Travelling expenses to access to materials []

- c) Poor technological skills hence can't access materials from the internet []

- d) Expensive to buy books, computers and other tools []

e) Others
(specify).....

8) In your Opinion, is Distance learning cost effective?

- a) Yes []
- b) No. []

If yes how effective?

- a) No extra costs such as housing, buying books etc.
- b) Cheap compared to full time student.

c) Leading materials are relatively available at a low price.

d) Other

Specifyí í

9) Does the cost of education affect the performance of distance learners?

a) Yes [] b) No. []

10) What learner support services provided by the distance learning programs?

Please list

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í í

11) Are the learnerø support services adequate?

a) Yes [] b) No. []

12) In your own opinion, does learners support services influences progression in Distance learning programs?

a) Yes [] b) No. []

If yes Please explain?

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13) What are some of the challenges; do you think hinder distance learning in Nyamira County?

Listí
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APPENDIX 3: AUTHORITY LETTER