

The Private Cost of National Certificate in Education (NCE) Through National Teachers Institute Distance learning Programme in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study is set out to examine the private cost of National Certificate in Education, through the distance learning mode as organized by the National Teachers Institute (NTI) Ekiti State branch in Nigeria. This was to open the eyes of the prospective students to know what on the average he has to spend and also to provide data for the state chapters of the institute on how to ease the burden of the students undergoing the course. The study made use of cross-sectional data retrieval format to collect the necessary information needed for the three circles contact period. The data was analyzed using arithmetic mean and percentages. It was found out that tuition fees accounted for the percentages of students' expenditure, followed by examination fees, and mid-day meal. Library, sports and development levy are not relevant for this type of student. The federal Government of Nigeria could subsidize the tuition fees for the prospective grade II teachers so as to ease their problem because majority of them are unemployed.

Keywords: Circles, students' year, private cost, distance learning, indirect cost, cost efficient.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian National Teachers Institute (NTI) is a distance education institution for the training of teachers. The institute which is located in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria was established based on Acts No. 7 of April 1978. Part of the objective of the institute among others is:

- to identify and clarify professional requirement of teachers and teaching,
- to achieve this objective, the institute was charged with the task of producing qualified teachers to meet the new challenges posed by the shortage of teachers to implement the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria.

To this end, the institute's first programme, Teachers' Grade II certificate programme commence in 1984, which was meant to produce and upgrade under qualified teachers to teach in primary schools. Also the institute's Nigerian certificate in Education (NCE) started in 1990. It was meant to upgrade Teachers' Grade II certificate holders to NCE level, so as to form the basic manpower needed to teach in primary and junior secondary schools.

Teachers are indispensable to any educational system, in fact, no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN 2004) UNESCO (2002) asserted that distance education has been used to address the problem of teachers' supply as manifested in shortage of teachers.

Distance education is a form of education and training delivery in which students are remote from the distance education institution. The instructors and the students are not in the same location. Learners are separated from instructional base or teacher either in time or space for a significant portion of their learning. (Barron 1999 and Tooth 2000)

UNESCO (2002), asserted that, distance learning offers unique opportunities for life-long learning to working adult out of school programme for children and youth who are unable to attend ordinary school, as a result of disability, illness or remote location, educational opportunities for nomadic and itinerant groups pre-service teachers' preparation and in-service development. According to FRN (2004) distance learning may include contact or no contact and part time education. Various technologies have been used for distance education, but print-based correspondence courses have been, and will continue to be the dominant and delivery mechanism in both the developed and the developing world. The National Teachers Institute in Nigeria made use of print and face-to-face contact period. Students meet at study centers on weekend and holidays and also use instructional materials prepared by the National Teachers Institute (NTI).

On the cost side, Fafunwa (2004) opined that the books printed in the institute are sold to the students. The students also pay fees covering tuition, examinations and other charges. Cost of any type of educational programme, can be considered as social and private. The social cost is what the government spent in terms of monetary outlay to carry out an educational programme, while private cost is what an individual undergoing such programme spent. When an individual decide to enroll for an NCE course through the National Teachers' Institute, (Distance learning system) what he/she spent to facilitate the educational programme is referred to as private cost. It can either be direct or indirect. The direct private cost refers to the cost incurred when an individual takes the decision of going to school or his/her parents decide to enroll him/her for distance learning studies. While the indirect private cost refers to the earnings forgone, which is the opportunity cost. In case of National Teachers' Institute, NCE programme, majority of the students are practicing Grade II teachers who did not forgo their monthly salary. The cost-efficiency of the programme can be better compared with the conventional mode of obtaining National certificate in Education in Ekiti State of Nigeria.

Cost efficiency considers the question "How expensive is distance education (compared to other systems)?" Distance education is generally considered cost efficient because of its potential to benefit from economies of scale. The cost of developing and designing courses and instructional materials are one-time costs (fixed costs) that are amortized or spread over time. These materials are then made available (online, or by correspondence) and reused many times. Unlike in traditional education, the more students who use the materials, the greater the cost efficiency. Cost drivers (variable costs) for distance education include the numbers of students per course and per site, the use of site coordinators, cost of distributing materials, length of courses, and choice of technology/media. Efficiency is also measured in terms of cost avoidance through elimination of traditional expenses such as travel costs.

Private cost represents the cost of private tuition and other expenses borne by the home or private institutions such as religious organizations to educate the child within the education system. Most distance education affords the wife and husband to join hands together to sponsor themselves to higher education programmes. This may occur during or after childbirth for the couples.

Borode .(2003) asserted that when compared with conventional face-to-face higher education is greater than the conventional programme, in that the cost of operating distance education is borne by the participating student.

This study is borne out of a desire to know what on the average, a teacher with grade II teacher certificate will have to spend to get himself/herself through the distance learning via NTI, NCE programme. This will enable the prospective candidate to allocate his financial resources judiciously. The distance learning programme adopted the use of circle to represent student year. To complete an NCE distance learning programme, the student will have to undergo three circles, a cross-sectional data retrieval format was used to collect the information on necessary cost items from the study centers in Ekiti State. The use of statistical averages like mean and percentages was used to analyze the data.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the private cost of operating National certificate in Education (NCE) course through the distance learning system in Ekiti State for the year 2007?

RESULTS

Table: 1
Private Cost of N.C.E. through distance learning system in Ekiti State. N.T.I. (Year 2007)

S/N	Items	Amount in Naira	Percentage %
1	Tuition fees	15,943.1	55.6
2	Examination fees	2,714.3	9.5
3	Stationeries (pencils, rulers, biro etc)	1,170.0	9.5
4	Game fees	-	-
5	Development levy	-	-
6	Library fees	-	-
7	Transport	2,034.8	7.1
8	Registration/Admission fees	2,456.8	8.6
9	Mid-Day meal	2,703.6	9.4
10	Incidental Expenses	1,634.5	5.7
11	Total	28,657.1	100
	N.B indirect cost.	-	-

The table above revealed the private cost structure of National certificate in Education through the Distance learning system.

From the table, 55.6% of the students' expenditure goes to the tuition fees, followed by 9.5% of Examination fees. Mid-day meal accounted for 9.4% of the total money spent by the student while the least expenditure is on the stationeries (pencils, Rulers & Biros et.c.) and registration fees accounted for 8.6% of the private cost.

DISCUSSION

The students paid for all the expenses required to operate the programme. The cost of all the printed materials needed to operate the programme was already inbuilt in the tuition fee that is why it is higher than any cost item.

Games fees, Development levy and Library fees are not relevant to them, because the library facilities are not available in all the study centers. The short period of face-to-face contact period did not allow sporting activities to take place, hence the student did not pay any money for the sports.

Likewise the development levy are not relevant as study centers are acquired on-rental agreement. All the materials needed to be taught and read, are already in the print. The students only meet for a short period for face-to-face instruction.

All the Examination materials are not provided free of charge to the students this amounted to 9.5% of the total private cost.

During the short period of face-to-face contacts in all the study centers, students do spend some amount of money for afternoon lunch. This amounted to 9.4% of the total private cost. In Nigeria, because of the low pace of technological advancements, students cannot rely on the media communication alone, which is why face-to-face contact period is being used for all necessary instructions and Examinations.

The use of computer, internet facilities, radio and Television based learning are yet to be fully developed and put into operation in Nigerian based distance learning. The emphasis is on the printed materials through post-office correspondence and distribution made through the study centers facilitators.

The use of E-mail, internet facilities is limited to the students living in the urban areas, whereas those living in the rural communities find it difficult to have access to the instructional materials through internet and e-mail facility.

Conclusion

The prospective students who are mainly holders of teachers' grade II certificate may not find the operating cost difficult as they could get the money needed through savings from their monthly salary. The students did not forgo their salary while on the course.

It is like on-the-job training for them. Hence, there is no monetary opportunity cost for the programme. The prospective teacher's grade II students are therefore encouraged to further their education to National certificate in Education (NCE) level through the distance learning programme, rather than leaving their job for conventional NCE programme at such a time that the country is witnessing unemployment problem in the various sectors of the economy.

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