DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER COMPETENCIES. A CASE STUDY OF THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMME OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY.

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ABSTRACT

The Bachelor of Education External Degree Programme of Makerere University was launched in 1991. It was meant to give diploma teachers opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and skills in their various fields of specialisation (CCE,1991). This report is part of a study which is being carried out on Distance education and development of teacher competencies. The paper focuses on examining whether the B.Ed (External) helps the teachers on the programme acquire key teacher competencies like indepth subject matter content, mastery of relevant delivery methods plus acquisition of management and administrative skills. Using questionnaires, interview schedules, non standardised competence tests and lesson observations the study reached a total of 403 respondents drawn from different districts in the country – Gulu, lira, Soroti, Mbale, Masindi, Mbarara,Kabale, Kampala, Entebbe, Wakiso, and Mpigi. The study reveals that, although the B.Ed (External) has helped teachers improve their knowledge and skills, it has not entirely helped teachers acquire key teacher competencies because of weakness in the programme and in its administration and management.

1.0 Introduction

The Bachelor of Education (External) (B.Ed External) was launched in 1991with the overall aim of preparing *'the students for adequate professional competence in facilitating learning and to give the students in-depth knowledge of teaching subjects selected for specialization'* (CCE 1990:22). Since its launching, the B.Ed (External) has come a long way. It has grown from only 198 students admitted in 1991 to current total enrolment of 3,348. However, in spite of this growth, there have been fears that the programme is

not as effective and efficient as it should be. One of the areas of concern is the programmes effectiveness in helping teachers acquire key teacher competencies.

According to the Teachers' Code of Conduct for Uganda's teachers, *'a teacher's chief responsibility is towards child/learner…and the teacher shall guide each child/learner…in order to develop the child/learner in body, soul, character and personality* (Ssekamwa 2001:82). Teacher education programmes in Uganda are therefore expected to prepare teachers to fulfil this role so the competencies that teachers acquire during their training should be the kind that will enable them do so (Obwoya Kinyera, Auma-Okumu, et.al 2002:14).

1.2 The Problem

Distance education is one of the avenues through which teachers are being trained and upgraded. The Bachelor of Education External Degree Programme of Makerere University was launched in 1991. The programme was established primarily to upgrade diploma teachers to a degree level and also prepare them for professional competence with adequate knowledge and skills in their teaching subjects (CCE, 1990). For distance education to be effective in training however, it must have strong student support systems in place. However according to Bbuye (2000) and Aguti (2003) the BED Programme has a weak student support system because most of the resources are not only inadequate but also centralised making it difficult for most of the students to be supported. It is now feared that this inadequate student support system is likely to impact negatively on acquisition of teacher competencies. This is demonstrated in lack improvement in students' performance at their places of work and failure of the graduates of the programme to be entrusted with key positions in the education system (Aguti,2003). This study by Aguti however, did not explore this subject of teacher competencies in depth, hence the need to revisit it. These fears are substantiated by (Yates et al, 2000) who observe that training teachers using distance education means that large numbers of teachers are being reached; however, reaching them does not mean that their learning is of good quality,

or that they apply what they learn successfully to their teaching. This study therefore intends to find out whether the BED external programme of Makerere University has been able to successfully provide the student teachers with the necessary teacher competencies like in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, improved methods of teaching and administrative skills.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To assess whether the B.Ed External Programme has increased the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter.
2. To explore whether the B.Ed External Programme has enhanced the teachers' delivery methods and skills.
3. To assess whether the B.Ed External Programme has equipped teachers with skills of managing and administering educational activities.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Has the B.Ed External Programme helped teachers to improve on their knowledge of subject matter?
2. Has the B.Ed External Programme helped to enhance teachers' delivery methods?
3. Does the B.Ed External Programme provide its student teachers with the managing and administering educational activities?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Main study Methodology

The study will adopt both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. To gather the relevant data, the following instruments will be used on the target population; questionnaires for students of B.Ed (External) both current and graduates, tutors, and administrators of B.Ed (External); an interview schedule for managers of the programme like the university administration, director of the institute of adult and Contnuing education, Head of Department od distance education, heads of of sections in the departmentpolicy makers at the Ministry of Education and Sports, District Education offices,National

teacher's colleges, Makerere university and Kyambogo university employers like head teachers. Lesson Observation, Non – Standardised Competency tests and Documentary Analysis. Using Purposive and Cluster sampling a total of 403 respondents will participate in this study and they will be drawn from different districts in the country; Gulu, lira, Soroti, Mbale, Masindi, Mbarara,Kabale, Kampala, Entebbe, Wakiso, and Mpigi. The data gathered will then be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; and presented descriptively, in tables and in graphs.

2.2 Pilot Study Methodology

The pilot study was carried out to ascertain the reliability of the instruments. The different instruments were given to a sample of respondents who had been non randomly selected. For reasons of accessibility and costs in terms of both money and time, the researcher focused on repondents around Makerere University. One hundred and twenty (120) current students participated in the study while on their face to face sessions. Five Bed graduates also participated. The number of students who participated in the study depended on their availability.

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approaches as anticipated. To gather the relevant data, the following instruments which were proposed in the main study were used; questionnaires, interviews, lesson observations, non standardised competency tests and documentary analysis.

Using Purposive and Cluster sampling a total of 218 respondents participated in the pilot study and they were drawn from different districts in the country; Gulu, lira, Soroti, Mbale, Masindi, Mbarara,Kabale, Kampala, Entebbe, Wakiso, and Mpigi.

2.3 Study Sample

Category	Total Sample	Pilot Study Sample
Students	300	150
Tutors	50	20
Administrators	20	10
Head teachers	72	36
Ministry of Education	4	2

The data gathered was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics; and presented descriptively, in tables and in graphs.

3.0 PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The results from the pilot study reveal that the Bed programme has helped in enhancing teacher competencies among its trainees. In the next sub sections, these results are presented according to the different research questions of the study.

3.1 Research Question One:

To assess whether the Bed Programme has increased the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter?

The B.Ed students were asked to rate their level of content before and after joining the B.Ed programme. The scores were as follows:

Level of Subject content before joining the Programme

	3rd yr	Percentage	1st yr	Percentage
Excellent	00	00	00	00
Good	37	59	25	63
Average	26	41	15	37
Poor	00	00	00	00

Level of content after joining the Bed programme

	3rd yr	Percentage	1st yr	Percentage
Excellent	27	47	19	49
Good	26	46	19	49
Average	4	7	1	2
Poor	00	00	00	00

The results showed that students indicated a lot of improvement in the content after joining the programme as shown from table with many students saying their level of content is now excellent. They gave the following reasons for this change of position.

The programme has improved on their content through in depth research done in the library as they try to consult references given and doing their course works. Some of the study materials written in distance education mode have helped understanding of the content. This has helped them get new knowledge which was not given at diploma level by studying familiar topics in details.

The content given on the Bed programme is 70% relevant to the school syllabus. This has contributed to improved performance among their students back in schools.

The students who claimed that their content was good even before joining the Bed programme argued that their students have been passing national examinations and also that the content was appropriate to the level they were teaching i.e. O' level.

The none standardised competency tests was given to first years and third year students of history (50), mathematics (10) and English (20) to test the students knowledge of content before and after joining the B.Ed programme. The results showed the following variations in performance.

History

	3rd yr	Percentage	1 Yr	Percentage
Excellent	35	70	07	14
Good	10	20	14	28
Average	05	10	27	54
Poor	00	00	02	04

English

	3rd yrs	Percentage	**1st yr**	Percentage
Excellent	09	45	00	**00**
Good	10	50	08	**40**
Average	01	5	12	**60**
Poor	00		00	**00**

Mathematics

	3rd yr	**Percentage**	**1st yr**	**Percentage**
Excellent	05	50	00	**00**
Good	03	30	02	**20**
Average	02	20	05	**50**
Poor	00	00	03	**30**

The results above show us that third year students scored better in all the subjects of Mathematics, English and History than first years which are an indication that the content offered at Diploma level is not the same as degree. The third years that had got exposed to the course before were able to do well compared first years who used their diploma knowledge. However, it important to note that most third years did not have the content at the figure tips majority requested to consult their notes first. This is an indication of a

weakness in the system that does not ensure retention of knowledge but rather examination oriented system. About 42% of the first years doing History did so well reflecting a deficiency in the courses offered in the subject. This could be that some of the courses offered are duplicating Diploma content.

3.1.1 Mechanisms put in place to ensure acquisition of subject content.

The department of distance education has put in place the following mechanisms to ensure acquisition of subject matter by the students. The department has tried to provide study materials in different forms possible to enable students do research .The students are also encouraged to read beyond the study materials provided and what they are given during face to face. This is emphasised by giving students tasks through course works that force them to read widely especially when you specify the number of pages the course work should cover. The department has further put in place Internet connection at the centre and in some upcountry centres to assist students do indepth research.

3.1.2 Ways of improving Content Enhancement on the Bed Programme

Students, tutors and managers were asked suggest ways the programme can improve on subject content delivery and they were as follows;

i)   The department should avail all the relevant study materials to the students since they are teacher in distance education. The departmental book bank should be stocked with current and up to date materials and information.

ii) ICT facilities should be improved incorporated in the study materials and decentralised so that students can utilise them to research in

depth in their areas of study. Provide computer skills and internet services to the students to facilitate in-depth research.

iii) The department should provide enough time for face to face to allow tutors cover the course outlines since the study materials are not adequate. Tutors should also endeavour to use teaching aids to enhance learning especially when they are handling abstract concepts.

iv) The programme should address the needs of the schools by teaching relevant courses which meet the needs of the O' and A' level syllabus.

4.0 Research Question two: To assess whether the Bed External programme helps students to improve on their teaching methods?

The students were asked to rate their level of teaching methods before and after joining the Bed programme. The rationale was to find out whether the B.Ed programme has had any impact on the teachers teaching skills.

Level of teaching methods before joining the Bed Programme

	3rd yr	Percentage	1st yr	Percentage
Excellent	06	09	01	**03**
Good	42	64	26	**67**
Average	18	27	12	**31**
Poor	00	00	00	**00**

Level of teaching methods after joining the Bed programme

	3rd yr	Percentage	1st yr	Percentage
Excellent	36	55	20	**50**
Good	30	45	14	**35**
Average	00	00	03	**7.5**
Poor	00	00	03	**7.5**

The tables above showed both third and first year students claimed their teaching methods before the programme were good since they are already qualified teachers. They however acknowledged that after exposure to the programme they have become excellent in class. They claimed to be teaching confidently and have realised improved performance in the classes. They also sighted use of a variety of teaching methods learnt on the Bed programme. However, during the school visits made, the five students visited only two had all their schemes of work and lesson plans in place. Those who did not claimed they had not got time to make them and that the administration does not ask for them. Other than the teachers teaching with confidence there was limited use of teaching aids. This shows that the students had not appreciated the value of these activities neither is supervision effective back in schools to ensure seriousness in the classroom.

Other issues highlighted by managers, tutors and students affecting improvement in teaching methods included the following; Failure of the programme to provide for practical activities in the courses offered. This mainly because of the huge numbers of students and inadequate facilities for the same. There is no school practice so the teachers cannot acquire 'teaching skills, designing learning materials as well as assessing and examining…'

Time for face to face sessions is limited' so students do not get sufficient time to practice and acquire the necessary competencies. The teaching methods employed by the tutors do not facilitate acquisition of teaching skills for example lecture method which the students said is commonly employed. The tutors said they use it due to huge numbers of students. The emphasis is on acquisition of content; the programme is focused on academic rather than education activities and is too theoretical. This concurs with what Bates (1994) as quoted by Aguti (2003) who says that distance education may be more effective at delivering facts or information but may not be so effective at helping learners acquire certain skills.

4.1 School Practice

The question on whether the Bed students should be sent for school practice was asked to students, tutors and the managers and these were their responses; B.Ed External students should be sent for school practice, among the third year student respondents, 9% strongly agreed, 2% agreed, 25% disagreed while a sweeping 64% strongly disagreed. Asked to give reasons for disagreeing they included the following;

Some respondents said no because they have taught long enough, and that all they need is material, theoretical and professional methods of handling learners. They also argued that all the skills of teaching and methods were given to the students at Grade V course and school practice was done, since these students are already in the system, are experienced fulltime teachers, teaching practice would be wastage of time and resources. However some said if School Practice is to be done as a university requirement then it should be done in other schools not the ones they teach were they are already recognized as qualified teacher. That this may not appear well to the students they teach.

Those who agreed said that since the content of the programme elevates the students to another level, their competences should be tested through teaching practice. They also suggested that for those who are not practicing teachers then school practice can be replaced with research.

A contrasting view came from one respondent who said that since the students are qualified and practicing teachers, there is no rationale for testing methodology, instead, they should be tested on whether their knowledge content has deepened which can be done through written examinations and judging from their responses and discussion of issues. One of the managers said that Inservice teacher education emphasised indepth content not methods.

Some tutors interviewed however, said It is necessary to observe the trainees implement the principles and methodologies they learn due to various reasons. Supervision helps to ensure that the students have grasped the required knowledge and concepts. Evaluation and assessment of the students helps them improve on their weak areas, It also helps tutors to get feedback and to know if there is need to revise the way they deliver to these students. Since the O' level and A' level teaching methodologies are different, if the programme is elevating them to teach at A'level then supervision is necessary.

The managers however said that they are aware of the need for school practice on the programme since it is true that the students are being exposed to new knowledge and skills hence the need for teaching practice. They pointed out that the department was facing the challenge of inadequate resources both financial and human to carry out this exercise. They however,

promised that in their next review of the programme school practice will have to be considered.

4.2 Mechanisms put in place to ensure acquisition of Teaching Methods

There are also mechanisms put in place by the lecturers and programme managers to ensure that the student teachers are competent in the teaching methods of their various subjects. Teaching methods are part of the curriculum. They are taught courses in teaching methods when on program both generally and in specific subjects.Examinations in subject and general methods are also administerd to the students to assess learning.

4.3 Suggestions by students and tutors

The students, tutors and other key informants suggested the following as some of the measures the department can put in place to improve on enhancement of teaching methods.Teaching practice can be done as an attachment, the department should make use of Personal tutors and mentors in sister institution to assist students wherever they are. They also advocated for active learning to be encouraged to allow students to put into practice what they have learnt, the programme should also avail more reference materials, teaching materials, notes and handouts, on teaching methods. Finally that the University should support the programme managers to acquire her own lecturers instead of outsourcing who are committed to the success of the programme.

5.0 Research Question Three: To assess whether the Bed External Programme has equipped students with skills of manageing and administering educational activities?

Students, tutors, managers and headteachers were asked whether the Bed programme equips students with management and administrative skills.

45% of the student respondents said that the programme exposes them to some skills in administration and management. They highlighted the following as efforts made; The Bed curriculum has a course unit in education administartion which is general course for all the students. Under this unit the students are exposed to Management and administartion skills like planning, organising,directing, coordination, staffing and reporting.

Students are also encouraged to parcipate in leadership by taking up positions of responsibility right from subject level to the University Guild. Students also participate in decision making at different levels in the university. Students are also exposed to communication skills through interactions with tutors and fellow students. The programme equips students with skills in making their own choices and decisions on choice of courses and options through shared experiences and discussions between students and tutors. The nature and structure of the Bed programme teaches one to manage his / her time by balancing work, domestic affairs and studies.

Planning skills have been passed on from their tutors' guidance and counselling on how to manage their finances so as to cater for their fees and other mantainance cost while at the campus.

The researcher also found out that 40% of the students respondents said they are not exposed to managenemt skills because of the claim that there is no deliberate effort by the programme managers to pass on skills in management and administration, the Bed students are not involved in decicion making at the university neither are they consulted on anything as stakeholders, no effort has been made to pass on communication skills through seminars, workshops, discussions etc. They also claimed that department has failed model management skills to the students because it is always disorganised and does not seem to plan well for her activities. They further contend that staffing and directing skills are exposed to the students in a negative way for example; few lectuers Vs large numbers of students, unfriendly staff, apathy to students and poor service to students.

The students were asked what they think the department should do to equip students with management and administrative skills? The Programme should introduce compulsory course units of management and administration of educational activities and be taught properly. The programme should also encourage interaction, talks, discussions, dialogue and teamwork between students and other stakeholders. The department should involve students in

administration and practical skills for example they should participate in decision making or should be consulted when making major decisions affeting them. Finally the department should be a role model in planning and organisational skills. The bureacracy at the university should be cut down to show good management skills.

5.1 Mechanisms put in place by the tutors and managers to ensure that the student-teachers are competent in administrative and management skills are:

According to the managers of the B.Ed programme, the department of distance education has put in place the following mechanisms to ensure acquisition of management skills. There is a component on management and administration in courses taught, for example education administration in educational foundations is taught and examined. Guidance and counselling on these skills is given to all students, they have also been provided relevant reading materials on education management and administration. Students are are also encouraged to participate in leadership at all levels in the university. Student leaders participate in departmental planning workshops to seek for their views before major decisions are made, student leaders also attend faculty academic boards of studies to ensure transparency and fairness regarding their academics.

6.0 Views of the policy makers and Employers
Policy makers and employers were asked to give reasons for their views. Some policy makers were of the view that the programme does help the

teachers acquire competencies although some of them also added that this is not achieved fully. The policy makers and employers gave a number of reasons for believing that the B.Ed actually helps teachers acquire the vital competencies that they need as teachers. These were about 67% According to them this is because:

Courses offered help upgrade the teachers' subject knowledge and skills, there is wider research coverage at degree level compared to a diploma which exposes students to more literature in education and hence improve on their content. The B.Ed curriculum also gives opportunity to trainees to refresh their knowledge and skills. It exposes students to more advanced pedagogical skills which helps them to perform in schools. The programme also reminds students about the professional ethics which assist them to do their work professionally and since teachers study as they work, B.ED helps them immediately apply what they learn in the field.

However, 10% of these policy makers and employers did not believe that the B.Ed helps teachers acquire the necessary competencies. The reasons given were that; Bed products cannot ably handle A' level classes for students to pass national examinations. The B.Ed graduates are weak in content knowledge because the B.Ed curriculum emphasises professional subjects other than teaching subjects. The courses offered are also too theoretical and so content and pedagogy (theory and practice) are divorced and not integrated in the delivery. Many of these students also have numerous other responsibilities and so are unable to concentrate so as to develop the competencies.

7.0 Students Support Services in place to ensure acquisition of teacher Competecies;

According to the managers of the B.Ed programme, the department of distance education has put in place the following support services to ensure acquisition of teacher competencies.

The Face to face sessions are held regularly and during school holidays. This helps them to catch up with their work, tutor – student interactions are facilitated through regular assessments in assignments and examinations, the department has also trained tutors, writers, editors and reviewers of the Bed study materials and to handle students proffessionally. Library services are open to all students. The university library, school of education library, departmental book bank and in upcountry centres. Students study centers are operational and students are encouraged to use them for their study groups however, most students meet in their localities and support one another. ICTs have also been developed and integrated in the programme for teaching and learning purposes. The department has a website where all issues consernning the programme are uploaded. Guidance and counseling services available. Tutors and administrators counsel and guide students on various academic and personal issues. General Information is also readily available to the students who need it through the website, radio announcements, notice baords, reception and circulars.

Although the B.Ed (External) has helped teachers improve their knowledge and skills, it has not entirely helped teachers acquire key teacher competencies because of weaknesses in the administration and management of students support services. The preliminary results of this study revealed that whereas the B.Ed (External) has helped teachers acquire some key competencies, this is not wholly achieved because of poor student services and inadequacies in the curriculum, methods of teaching, quality and access to study materials, and because of the inadequate opportunities for practice.

7.1 Weakness in the Administration and Management of the Programme

This weakness is greatly highlighted in the apparent inadequate students support systems and failure of the administration to provide quality study materials for students. Keegan (1996:131) identifies student support as one of the key sub systems in distance education which every institution should have.

i) **Inadequate study materials to guide them.**

Good quality and well prepared study materials whether print based or employing a range of multi media approaches are the "teacher " in distance education models (Wrightson and Otto, 2005). However, in the B.Ed (External) programme, the respondents were of the view that the study materials are inadequate both in quality and quantity so the study materials do not help the learners acquire the competencies needed. Since these materials are of poor quality, this does not promote active learning which good study materials ought to.

Interviews with the managers of the programme revealed that the department has about 40% of the study materials written in distance education mode, the rest are drafts and hand outs, some are unprocessed. The study materials, not written in the distance education mode do not facilitate self study. The process of developing distance education study materials is slow because of inadequate human and financial resources. This therefore means that the students are not having the relevant study materials so with this kind of scenario how do you expect the content to improve?

ii) **Inadequate Students support services**

According to the managers of the B.Ed programme interviewed, the department of distance education faces the following challenges in regard to students' support services.

a) Poor Administrative support

Structure of the programme- the Bed is governed by the dual mode system which does not give alot of autonomy to the department to run her own affairs. For example this scenario has encouraged over-centralisation of students students services. These among others include registration of students, management of assignments, examinations and face to face tutorials. About 70% of the students interviewed requested that these services should be decentralised for efficient and effective service delivery and also to cut down on students costs while on campus.

High dependency on part - time and free lance staff for both course development and tutoring due to limited establishment under the department status.

b) Face to face Tutorials

This is a major student support on the Bed programme. The programme relies heavily on face to face sessions due to inadequate study materials however there are challenges with this exercise which makes one wonder whether it is effective in helping the students to acquire the teacher competencies.

Student respondents applauded the benefits of face to face sessions however as alluded earlier the controversies were on the scheduling of face to face, the number of face to face sessions per semester, ineffective teaching methods used by lecturers and poor monitoring mechanisms. Student respondents further think that the some tutors come to the classroom ill prepared and instead of facilitating learning they lecture. According to Sherry (1990) a distance education tutor has to know a little more in addition to being certified to teach, or being knowledgeable in the subject area.

c) Study centres

There are a number of Makerere University up-country study centres across the country. Out of these nine only five are operational in terms of having internet connection and one ful time staff. These centres however have limitations. They are ill equipped to handle the students. 65% of the students interviewed reported knowledge of the existance of study centers however said they are not helpful because they lack relevant study materials, ICT facilities, qualified staff to offer both academic and administrative guidance.

C) Information Communication Technology (ICT)

The Bed programme have the following ICTs in place. Distance education website, internet connection in the five functional centres, radio, mobile phones and print. Most of these are used for announcements other than the teaching component. The following are limitations of ICT use in Makerere;

ICTs as a means of remote support are all lacking in the centres. The telephones as a means of support have limited capacity for teaching and learning purposes. There is alot of computer illiteracy among students and the tutors to embrace ICT for teaching and learning purposes. The problem is however compounded by lack of electricity in some locations which limits ICT use.

Inappropriate Methods of Teaching by Tutors

For teachers to acquire the various teaching competencies, methods of teaching and learning should promote acquisition of those competencies (Aguti,2003). However, on the question of whether the tutors are knowledgeable in handling distance learners, the responses were as follows:

About 14% strongly agreed, 59% agreed 22 % disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed.According to some tutors interviewed, they know that they are required to facilitate during face to face but circumstances do not allow them e.g time and the large number of students. This may be consistent with what Aguti (2003) asserts that majority of the tutors in the programme are lecturers in universities and can therefore be said to be out of touch with the classroom practice and so unable to realistically help teachers acquire competencies needed in the classroom. The tutors on the distance education programme should be trained to teach these students otherwise the objectives are not being achieved.

8.0 Other factors that affect acquition of teacher Competencies on the Bed programme

Quality of students

About 65% of the tutors said that most of the Bed students are not up to the task. The quality of their work is poor which they attributed to lack of commitment and their weak background which they come with at the university. This is consistent with what Robinson and Latchem (2003:4) says that a number of students joining teacher training colleges join with much lower passes than students joining other professional courses.

Motivation for study

Teachers enrolled for B.Ed are motivated by higher pay about 75% of the students interviewed indicated that they came back to study to get a degree so that they can get a promotion. Students are therefore keen to simply pass exams and get the magic paper for promotion.

Lack of Study Skills in Distance Education.

The lack of study skills by the students has affected the way they learn, since they do not know what and how to do it. Teachers in distance education have less contact with students so students' progress is much more dependent on their own efforts. COL (2004) contends that for successful acquisition of intended objectives of teaching and learning in distance education, students should be exposed to the following study skills; planning, active learning, self assessment and note taking.

Lack of Personal Tutors

Failure to use personal tutors to assits students scattered all over the country due to lack of policy.

Poor Collaborative Relationships.

Poor collaborative relations with other institutions nearer to the students. The University is not making use of sister institutions scattered all over the country to assit the students due to lack of policy.

Costs involved to both students and management.

Costs involved in the programme are quite high in terms of maintenance while on face-to-face and also on the management side it is expensive to run it for a significant number of days.

Inadequate tutor training in handling distance learners.

Most of the tutors however confessed that they had not been trained to teach other than the course outline which was given to them. This scenario means that most of the tutors are teaching but not facilitating which affects the quality of the service being offered and consequently the acquisition of teacher competencies. According to Sherry (1990) a distance education tutor has to know a little more in addition to being certified to teach, or being knowledgeable in the subject area.

Lack of a Needs Assessment Survey

This is basically to relate what the Bed programme offers with the needs of the schools. Many students and employers interviewed said that some of the

content given on the Bed programme is not related with what is being done in the school. This problem may be attributed largely to lack of stakeholders invovement when developing and reviewing programmes.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Preliminary results from this pilot study reveal that whereas the B.Ed (External) has helped teachers acquire some key competencies; this is not wholly achieved because of poor management of students support services and inadequacies in the curriculum, poor methods of teaching at university, quality and access to study materials, and because of the inadequate opportunities for practice. The challenge therefore is for the programme to address these deficiencies and inadequacies so as to ensure that the teachers graduating from the programme are competent enough to handle the tasks expected of them.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

- There is need to revisit instruments because some of the questions were vague, ambiguous and repeated. In this case repeated questions will be removed and those that appear vague and ambiguous will be focused and precise.
- There were also complaints from the respondents that the questionnaire was too long. This will be made short by removing redundant and repeated questions.
- Some of the terms or concepts used in the questionnaires were not understood by the respondents especially students and some tutors. Such questions will be removed from questionnaires and used in the interviews were opportunity for clarifications is provided for. Attempt will also be made to simplify the concepts in an understandable language.
- The structure and format of the instruments needed to change so as to ensure logical flow and to provide for coding of responses. This will be changed to provide for easy coding of data.

- Many students approached for lesson observation were not free with it as they feared it would affect their studies. This therefore attracted artificiality when teaching. A lot of sensitization of student respondents concerned will be done for them to be free to participate in the study.

- Lesson Observation provided first hand information, however, the exercise is tedious and expensive. The researcher intends to train research assistants to help in this exercise.

- Realized that lesson Observation can only be effective if the same students who did the non standardized competency tests are the ones observed.

- Many students approached to do the non standardized test were not willing as it was a bother because most of them had forgotten the content. The researcher will work closely with programme administrators and tutors to help in organizing students for the competency tests.

- Literature review: To be revisited to guide the new issues coming up.

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