THE IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES AND PRESENTATION STYLE OF KISWAHILI INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF B.ED (ARTS) DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of assessment procedures and presentation style in Kiswahili instructional materials on the academic performance of Bachelor of Education (Arts) University of Nairobi distance education students. The study used survey research design. A sample of 60 Kiswahili distance education students and 6 Kiswahili lecturers from University of Nairobi participated in this study. Data was collected from the respondents using questionnaire for the students and interview schedules for the lecturers. A document analysis schedule for the Kiswahili instructional materials was also used to analyze the materials. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed in themes based on the objectives of the study. The study revealed that the Kiswahili instructional materials issued to the Bachelor of Education (Arts) distance education students did not have proper and elaborate assessment procedures, had irrelevant and outdated content. Most of the lecturers used their own modified notes to teach the students and they set the examinations from the content in the notes hence majority of the students relied on the lecture notes and not the Kiswahili instructional materials provided. Therefore the study concluded that there was little significance in the influence of Kiswahili instructional materials on the academic performance of distance education students. The study recommended that Kiswahili instructional materials content should be reviewed and updated. Lecturers teaching the Kiswahili courses currently should be used in the revision of the instructional materials.

Keywords: Distance education, Kiswahili instructional materials, assessment procedures, presentation style, academic performance

1.1 Introduction

Open and Distance education Learning (ODeL) is recognized the world-over as a mode of education which helps large numbers of learners to access quality education without being in the campus face to face with the lecturer (Koul and Jenkin, 1990). Through this mode of education, quality education is made accessible at very low costs to persons whose work and family responsibilities or even personal preferences would not allow them to attend college or university on a full time basis. It provides such persons with opportunities to take courses at their own time depending on their abilities and conveniences (Bowa, 2008).

According to Gakuo (2006), Kenya introduced B.Ed degree courses by Distance Education (D.E) at the University of Nairobi in 1986. Prior to this, a number of commissions and reports had highlighted alternative modes of education provision. For example, the Mackay Report (Republic of Kenya, 1981) and the Kamunge Report (Republic of Kenya, 1988) included the use of distance education in the provision of education as part of their recommendations. The Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005
(Republic of Kenya, 2005) recommended the establishment of an open university and use of distance education in human resource development at all levels. According to Bowa (2008), the flexibility of the programme has opened up opportunities for working people whose full time jobs and other personal commitments do not allow them to pursue further studies on a full-time basis. They can study at home using the study materials or modules provided by the institution.

Performance of the students in distance education depends very much on the quality of instructional materials provided to them, assessment procedures and the presentation style. Since students learn at a distance separated from the lecturer and the institutions by distance and time, instructional media are used to reach them. However, availability of Kiswahili instructional materials is a concern at the University of Nairobi. Bowa (2008) explains that analysis of provision of course books showed that majority of the students are not issued with the materials. This, according to Mboroki (2007), means that most students use borrowed materials or rely mainly on the face to face tuition sessions for interactive learning experience. Mboroki (2007) explains that this shortfall in provision of the study materials is partly because the books are issued only to students who have paid full fees and partly because the production of materials does not match the demand for the materials. Bowa (2008) says that lack of instructional materials is a serious problem in a distance learning programme which relies heavily on the print medium. Their absence could mean that learners are not able to obtain structured instructions for the better part of their studies and this may affect the quality of learning and thereby academic performance of learners.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
Since the universities in Kenya opened their doors to the adult public by introducing distance education programmes, there has been an increase in enrolment of students in the University of Nairobi. This has given rise to the demand for instructional materials. The instructional materials have assessment procedures that students have to do to evaluate their understanding of the concepts. Given the fact that Kiswahili is a dynamic language the assessment procedures and the presentation style of the instructional materials have to be updated, modified, and revised to be in tandem with rapid development of the language. However, at the University of Nairobi Kiswahili instructional materials which were developed in 1988 continue to be issued to the students who join the distance education B.Ed (Arts) programme. How does the assessment procedures and presentation style in the Kiswahili instructional materials affect distance education students’ academic performance at the University of Nairobi?

1.3 Objectives of the study
This study was guided by the following objectives:
1. To examine how the assessment procedures in the Kiswahili instructional study materials affect students’ performance in the B.Ed (Arts) programme at the University of Nairobi.
2. To assess how user friendly the presentation style of instructions in Kiswahili instructional materials are in enhancing students’ academic performance at the University of Nairobi.

1.4 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework
Bowa (2008) argues that print media is the most widely used instructional material in Kenya and particularly in the University of Nairobi. He continues to say that print materials take a long time to produce but they are worth the effort. In Kenya, since learners are not quite able to access broadcasts or internet easily, print materials are used in distance education. The performance of students is therefore dependent on what they gather from the print material. Lack of quality materials is likely to have negative influence on academic performance while quality in the materials will enhance students’ academic performance.

To ensure quality, materials are prepared by a course team. The instructional materials used at the University of Nairobi’s School of Continuing and Distance Education for B.Ed (Arts) students are course books in form of printed lecture notes commonly known as unit books or modules. According to Bowa (2008), the learner is expected to interact with the study materials to have a learning
experience. Content of the material is therefore an important element of the quality. Other instructional materials quality issues that the study focuses on include the assessment procedures for self-evaluation and interaction and the general presentation of content. According to Dick & Carey (1996), modules (instructional materials) require the learner to interact actively with the content rather than read passively. The learners are asked to perform various tasks and receive feedback.

According to Bowa (2008), performance of distance learners is affected by many factors. Such factors include work and family commitments, financial status, predisposition and readiness for independent learning, availability and timeliness of appropriate learner support services, accessibility and user friendliness of administrative systems and staff; suitability of programme content or its design and delivery methods and ability to comprehend and deal with assessment requirements. Other factors that influence performance include level of motivation and commitment to study, access to and confidence with computers and other modern information technology, previous educational encounters, isolation and lack of belonging to an academic community and support from partners. He emphasizes however that print materials given to students have a bigger influence on academic performance as they provide much of the content.

Some Kiswahili instructional materials issued to the learners at the University were written over twenty years ago. Kiango (2005) observes that Kiswahili is a fast growing and a dynamic language which has undergone rapid development. Kiswahili language has developed over the last thirty years in terms of terminologies, linguistic theories, literary texts, pedagogy, status and usage. Therefore the content, assessment procedures and presentation style of Kiswahili instructional materials becomes a concern.

From this discussion of literature review, the following interrelated factors feed into the quality of Kiswahili instructional materials:
(i) Assessment procedures
(ii) Presentation styles

From these factors, we can develop this conceptual framework to guide in this study:

Fig. 1: Features of Kiswahili Instructional Materials in relation to Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment procedures in the instructional materials</td>
<td>STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation style of instructional material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interrelatedness of the Study Variables as perceived by the researchers

1.5 Research Methodology
This study was conducted using survey research design. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define survey as an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status with respect to one or more variables. The rationale behind the selection of the survey research design was that it would help the researchers collect
information from a large number of students through questionnaires dispatched and returned during the face to face sessions when the external degree students come to campus. The research was done among University of Nairobi B.Ed (Arts) distance education Kiswahili students and Kiswahili lecturers. According to statistics in the Department there were about 600 students taking Kiswahili in distance education and 6 lecturers handling Kiswahili units in the programme. This brought the total target population to 606. Together with this, Kiswahili instructional materials (modules) were also targeted for document analysis.

The sample size of this study was determined using Kerlinger (1983) suggestion that a minimum sample size of 10% of the population is a good enough representation. For the purpose of this study, 10% (60 students) of the population was sampled to participate. For lecturers however, purposive sampling was used whereby all the 6 lecturers were interviewed. A total sample of 66 respondents was therefore targeted. The study used questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis schedule. Questionnaires targeted students’ views while interview schedules were for the lecturers, which mainly sought the opinion of the lecturers on the content of the instructional materials, assessment procedures and presentation style. Document analysis schedule for Kiswahili instructional materials sought to analyze information on content, assessment procedures, presentation style and quality of production of the study materials.

1.6 Results and Discussion
The study sought to establish the frequency in which the self-evaluation questions in the Kiswahili instructional materials were answered by the students. For example, the students were asked to indicate the rate of answering assessment questions in the modules. The responses are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Respondents</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part III</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part VI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 1 indicate that 48% of the students rarely answered the questions given in the instructional materials, 35% of them sometimes answered and only 17% of the students always answered the assessment questions. The high rate of those who rarely answered can be attributed to the fact that there were Kiswahili instructional materials with irrelevant content meaning that even the self-evaluation questions and activities were also irrelevant. When the respondents were asked how the questions in the study materials contributed to their performance most of them said that the questions were of little significance as they rarely featured in the main examinations.

When lecturers’ opinion on the assessment questions in the Kiswahili instructional materials was sought however, most of them felt that the questions were okay in the light of the work covered. This was to say that based on the content covered, the questions were alright. This means that they only failed to be of significance when the content covered was itself not relevant. The influence of the assessment questions on performance of the students therefore depended on the content tested and if the same content was tested in the main examinations. The influence of the assessment questions to the performance of students was further undermined by the fact that the questions rarely featured in the main examinations as most of the lecturers (67%) used their own notes to teach and therefore set examinations from the same notes.
The study sought to establish the extent to which the Kiswahili instructional materials were user-friendly in terms of presentation style. The respondents were therefore asked whether they found the study materials learner friendly. Their responses are presented in the following Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of respondents</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III students</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part VI students</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study findings indicated that most of the respondents (59%) found the presentation style user-friendly against 41% who did not find the Kiswahili instructional materials presentation user-friendly. The 41% of the respondents who felt the presentation style was not learner friendly said that it lacked some aspects of distance study materials. For example, distance learning materials are written in an interactive language as if it were a lecturer addressing a student. For instance, a unit could open with the following words: “Welcome to Unit 1. In this unit you are going to learn about…” This kind of language was lacking in the materials thereby making them of less quality as distance study materials.

The document analysis of the module aimed at finding out if the presentation style followed the format of distance study modules. According to Bowa (2005), the following steps are followed when writing a lecture for distance education modules:

1. Lecture objectives are stated
2. Lecture outline is given
3. Lecture introduction
4. The topic and subtopic (heading scheme)
5. Lecture body- Important features of the lecture body include: Language, Style of presentation, Illustrations, Symbols, Intext questions, Summary and References

A document analysis of the Kiswahili instructional materials revealed that these features were not always considered when developing the materials provided to the students. The study findings showed that though the presentation style involved an introduction and revision questions, a summary was not always given. Summaries are useful in enabling a student have a quick look at the main points in a unit or a lecture. In the lecture body, the modules did not have symbols to assist the students. Wanjala and Barasa (2007) suggests that symbols should be used in module lectures to indicate the following: Activity, Objectives, In-text questions, Summary, Important notes and References.

These shortcomings in the presentation style make someone going through the Kiswahili instructional materials get the impression that they are not up-to standard as they do not meet all the requirements of distance education modules. This weakens the quality of the materials further as they fail to offer students some necessary guidance which would help them study well and perform better.

1.7 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concluded that the assessment questions seemed to be okay in the light of the chapters covered but were found to be of little influence on the performance of students where the content tested was not relevant or was not going to be examined in the main examinations or in continuous assessments tests. The study further concluded that the presentation style was learner friendly in terms of language use but failed to involve symbols to guide students and summary notes which could be useful when students were preparing to sit for examinations. This reduced the influence of the instructional materials on performance of students as they opted for lecture notes which had summarized notes.
Therefore, the academic performance of students in Kiswahili was not influenced by the print instructional materials issued to them. The study found out that the students mainly relied on lecture notes given to them during the face to face sessions.

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that:

i. A review of the Kiswahili instructional materials issued to the students was necessary to include recent developments in Kiswahili and modern approaches in teaching/learning process. The content in the materials should always be in line with the course outlines the lecturers were using when teaching and setting examinations.

ii. Regular revision of Kiswahili instructional materials should be done as the literary texts recommended to students as set books in the course changed regularly as new ones came into the market and were found better in meeting the needs of the time.

iii. Lecturers teaching the various Kiswahili courses should be involved in the development and revision of the instructional materials. This would make the materials be in tandem with the lectures that are given during the face to face sessions thereby increasing the value of the materials and subsequently enhancing their quality. This would eventually make the material have a positive influence on the performance of the students.

iv. The self-assessment questions in the Kiswahili instructional materials should be modified and be in tandem with the questions set in the main examinations and in the Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs). The presentation style should include summary notes and symbols to guide learners through the study materials.

References


Training for the next Decade and Beyond (Kamunge Report). Nairobi: Government Printer.
