Impact of Modern Technology-The Computers and Internet on Open and Distance Learning: A Case Study of Zou Masvingo Region

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Abstract

Modern technology plays a major role in Open and Distance Learning (Akdemir, 2008). Many institutions of higher learning have adopted online education as the next logical step in educational delivery systems. Online courses are now being offered to respond to the high demand for flexible learning environments (O'Malley and Mac Craw, 1999). Attending face –to- face courses is problematic for many individuals due to a number of reasons such as time limitations, distance one travels to take courses and financial reasons (Frey, Faul, & Yankelov, 2003). Like many other institutions of ODL, ZOU is now faced with the challenge of offering online courses in addition to face-to-face courses. A descriptive survey was conducted to investigate the state of preparedness and perceptions of ZOU staff and students about offering ODL online in Masvingo. Questionnaires were used to gather data on ZOU's preparedness to do registration online send or receive assignments, course-outlines, tutorials and any other communications. Findings indicated a number of challenges that include lack of skilled personnel and lack of internet facilities. Positive as well as negative perceptions about online courses were registered. The study recommends training of lecturers and establishment of computer laboratories and internet facilities at the district centers.

Keywords: *Distance Learning, Open and Distance Learning, E-Learning, E-Learning Readiness, Impact*