

Emerging Technologies: Promotion of ODL and A Challenge to Zimbabwe's ODL Institutions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore experiences of lecturers and students in using information technologies in Zimbabwean Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions. To achieve this the following questions were formulated: to what extent do lecturers and students make use of information technologies in ODL institutions in Zimbabwe; what problems impede effective use of information technologies in ODL institutions in Zimbabwe; and what recommendations do are for policy and practice make to improve effective use of information technologies in Zimbabwean ODL institutions? Purposive and convenient sampling was used to select lecturers and students who participated in this study. Literature review showed shortage and high costs of equipment, software and inaccessible physical telecommunications infrastructure are major problems for developing countries. The findings indicate that the majority of lecturers and students lack ICT skills and the major stumbling block to IT literacy is limited or unveiled ICT facilities. The study recommends that both lecturers and students be trained in use of ICT through institutional short courses. The Ministries of Education should have staff development policies that utilize ODL facilities in enhancing ICT skills among Zimbabwean, potential ODL students and lecturers. Effective monetary policies that can enhance ODL state universities in the provision of functional ICT facility should be put in place by the government of Zimbabwe. Considering that our sample was small we recommend that further research involving the ten regions be conducted to get a holistic picture of use of ICT in ODL institutions.