

Management Practices in Distance Education for Health Professions in Kenya

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By

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ABSTRACT

Distance Education (DE) is a formal process of learning that occurs when a learner and instructor are separated by distance or time. This study set out to determine management practices in Distance Education for Health Professions (HP) in Kenya. The specific objectives were to: (i) establish management practices in DE for Health Professions in Kenya; (ii) identify teaching and learning strategies used; (iii) determine the methods of assessment used; and (iv) establish the resources used in DE.

A descriptive cross-sectional survey was used to conduct this study. The study required both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews. A sample of 368 respondents out of a population of 473 in Kenya was involved in the study. Primary and secondary data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results are presented in forms of tables, percentage distributions, bar graphs and pie charts.

The research results were as follows: (i) Policies and guidelines used in formal *classroom courses* are applied in the management of DE for HP in Kenya; (ii) DE in Kenya is entirely managed by heads of departments and course coordinators; (iii) independent and mixed mode learning (face-to-face and distance learning) are used to facilitate learning; (iv) essay questions and multiple choice questions are used to assess students learning; and (v) textbooks, developed starter packs and computers are used to facilitate learning and understanding.

On the basis of the findings, the study recommends the following for DE programmes: (1) Planning, organization and coordination should involve key stakeholders; (2) Innovative teaching and learning strategies should be used to provide flexible courses; (3) Trained mentors and lecturers need to be used for effective facilitation of learning; (4) Current technologies such as internet, computers and teleconferences should be used to facilitate learning and communication in DE; (5) Mixed mode delivery (face-to-face and distance learning) is an appropriate approach for health professionals in skills acquisition; and (6) The cost of DE should be affordable.

The study also proposes areas for further research including evaluation of DE programmes for HP training in Kenya and identifying effective approach for assessing clinical and practical skills in DE.