© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 3, pp.2292-2302 | ISSN: 2636-4484

THE DECLINE OF EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LIFELONG LEARNING

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ARTICLE INFO
Article No.: 0586
Accepted Date: 01/09/2026
Published Date: 20/09/2026
Type: Research

ABSTRACT
The research seeks to explore the history, causes, and impact of the declining trend in educational broadcasting in Nigeria specifically concerning equal access to education in Nigeria. The research was done through qualitative desk review and thematic analysis of literature. Literature on the topic of educational broadcasting in Nigeria ranging from 2005 to 2025 was reviewed, screened and analyzed thematically, particularly peer-reviewed literature and institutional literature. It was found that there existed a historical trend in educational broadcasting in relation to the change from the involvement of the government in the provision of educational broadcasting such as mass literacy campaigns and the "golden age" in the 1970s and 1980s to a declining trend due to four causes interrelated with each other. Underfunding was one of the four causes where the states have allocated no more than 1.3 percent of their education budget to adult literacy education while the government targeted 5 percent. Objective of the research is to study the history of the trend, the reasons for the trend and the consequences of the decreasing trend of educational broadcasting in Nigeria in connection with equality in education in Nigeria. The research has been performed by applying the method of qualitative literature review and thematic analysis of the topic. The literature on the topic of educational broadcasting in Nigeria from 2005 to 2025 has been analyzed thematically. It has been discovered that there was a trend in the past regarding educational broadcasting from the golden age in the 1970s and 1980s to the decreasing trend because of four related reasons. Under-funding is one of four reasons which means that the government has allocated only 1.3 percent of its education budget for adult literacy education although it was aimed at allocating 5 percent.

Keywords: Educational Broadcasting; Lifelong Learning; Equitable Access; Nigeria; Radio Education; Distance Learning

Introduction

Educational broadcasting in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. Educational broadcasts existed before independence, and the system has since passed through distinct periods of state support, expansion, and decline. However, all systematic efforts to exploit the potential of broadcasting as an educational tool have only begun since 1951 when the colonial Rediffusion Service of Nigeria was established and carried out educational broadcasts along with others for the increasing number of subscribers of wired radios (Omu, 1978 cited in Omang, Ulayi & Acha, 2025). Upon the country's independence the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation introduced "English by Radio" in 1960, which can be regarded as one of the first distance learning initiatives in Nigeria, with an attempt to teach pupils of primary and secondary schools such subjects as English, Mathematics and Science (Ajadi, Salawu & Adeoye, 2008). Better comprehension of the concept of broadcasting educational programs has come into being since the establishment of National Educational Television in 1964 and then in the 1970s due to exploitation of oil resources in Nigeria and the launch of National Functional Literacy Program reaching over two million people in five years. (Omang et al., 2025).

These two decades can be considered to be the golden era of educational broadcasting in Nigeria when there was a perfect combination of government support, airtime allocation, and listening clubs that made radio and TV channels a real means of mass education (Bhola, 1984). However, the following years can be characterized by gradual decline of educational broadcasting in the country proved by research evidence. A long-term policy analysis conducted by Aderinoye (2007) titled "The Decline of Educational Broadcasting in Nigeria" showed the declining process of educational radio broadcasting in Nigeria since the 1990s till today and blamed it on decreased governmental funding and commercialization of the media. Nevertheless, all further researches have proved the tendency according to which not more than a third of states in Nigeria conduct educational broadcasting via their own state-controlled TV stations (National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education [NMEC], 2018), (Uyo, 2019).

The overall problem is far much more complicated than the previous one on the issue of the problems in the relationship between governments and industries. It is not an issue of who has access to learning in a society in which learning is not accessible for the majority in a classroom setting. Nigeria is a country that has been documented to be having the most number of children that have never been in schools across the world. These statistics confirm the fact that Nigeria is among the nations with the largest number of illiterate people in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022). Among this population, radio and TV are the most used mass media communication; radio, in particular, which reaches about seventy percent of Nigerians (National Broadcasting Commission, 2021).

Furthermore, this has been compounded by the emergence of technology used in education which has come alongside the former in some ways. Great changes have been experienced in the education sector in most countries in terms of the use of technology and mobility learning since the closure of schools because of the pandemic, affecting the education of over thirty million children in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2021). The basis of these changes is the belief that technology can be used to replace broadcasting. However, what these institutions do not understand is that the population that would require broadcasting do not have electricity and gadgets to enable them learn their lessons via broadcast. As a way of investigating the effectiveness of educational broadcasting in Nigeria, Okafor (2022) points out some limitations. Degradation of educational broadcast in Nigeria and its significance for equality in lifelong learning will be examined in the current research paper. The current research paper is composed of five other sections which include

literature review, theoretical background, methodology, results and conclusion. Literature review will discuss the history of development of the educational broadcast in Nigeria. The theoretical background of the current research paper will use diffusion of innovations and andragogy theories.

Literature Review

Historical Growth and the Golden Era of Educational Broadcasting

As it can be seen from the literature review, the history of the usage of the educational broadcasting in Nigeria is related to "Rediffusion Service" of the colonial administration followed by the independent organizations such as "National Educational Television Service" (1964), and "English by Radio" broadcasting of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (1960) (Ajadi et al., 2008; Omang et al., 2025). Speaking about the analysis of the history of distance learning in Nigeria, it should be mentioned that according to Ajadi et al. (2008), the first distance learning program created in Nigeria has used the radio to teach people some elementary school subjects for those individuals who could not receive education in traditional classroom setting. In addition, as it was said above, the first distance learning program developed during the 1970s and 1980s and became highly sophisticated due to the period when broadcasting of education programs reached its heyday (Amadi, 2016). Evaluation of the "University of the Air" program performed by Okedara (1981) shows that two-thirds of the students have gained the functional literacy within six months, Moreover, according to Bhola (1984) in his cross-cultural study of literacy campaigns through broadcasting, programs in Nigeria were viewed among the most successful ones in the continent thanks to proper use of local languages and the audience, Furthermore, Olatunji and Adebisi (2021) support this argument by claiming that open and distance learning was developed in Nigeria during this period; therefore, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) appeared and its activities are connected with broadcasting and distance learning systems.

Causes and Evidence of Decline

Nevertheless, while the events were good in their historical context, as it can be seen from the literature review, the process of deterioration began in the 1990s. Some of the most convincing evidences of it can be found in the analysis performed by Aderinoye (2007), who states that the reasons for such changes were the poor quality and coverage of the programs due to absence of funding by the Nigerian government and commercialization of broadcasting due to the media deregulation of 1992. Moreover, The competition among broadcasting stations was caused by advertisements and the educational programs were replaced by other types of broadcasting (Uche 1996): On the other hand, the fact has been made known that this trend is achievable since less than a third of all the states in Nigeria use the state television stations to transmit educational programs (National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-formal Education [NMEC], 2018); (Uyo, 2019). The number of private radio stations providing programs related to education is less than five percent while approximately thirty-five percent of public radio stations provide such programs.

The issue of funding of the programs also falls into the similar trend. The policy of mass education in Nigeria requires that the states should provide at least five percent of their budget for adult literacy program, however, only 1.3 percent of budget has been provided by the states (Omang et al., 2025). Also, less than three percent of budget has been provided for adult literacy program under the Universal Basic Education program from 2000-2015 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2016).

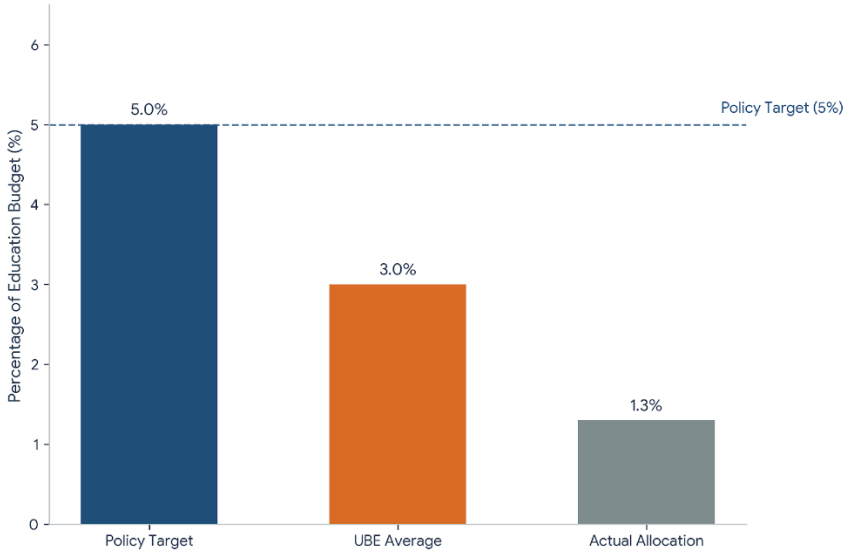


Figure 1: Policy Target vs. Actual Allocation for Adult Literacy Education in Nigeria
Sources: Omang et al. (2025); Federal Ministry of Education (2016)

Figure 1 illustrates the gap between the 5 per cent policy target and actual budgetary allocation for adult literacy. The radio broadcasting services program at the National Open University of Nigeria was, at first, well-funded politically, but things are no longer the same because the funds meant to finance the broadcasts have been misused (Jegede, 2018).

In addition to that, one should consider the aspect of infrastructural limitations that affect the development of the broadcast media in the country. In particular, rural areas that could be reached by the media for educational purposes lack access to electricity; thus, the problem becomes more complicated (Yakubu, 2018). Besides, the way broadcasting is done has changed because, as reported by Ezema (2015), less than twenty percent of the completion rate of one-way educational broadcasts takes place due to the matter of feedback.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

However, another obstacle leads to the reduction of the pedagogic nature of the rest of the programs. As pointed out by Ajadi et al. (2008), the distance education program in Nigeria was supposed to combine broadcasting, printing materials, and tutorial classes. Unfortunately, financial limitations made its implementation impossible. However, perhaps, it is not the demise of broadcasting that leads to the incapability of learners to interact with the learning materials. This means that the decay in the instructional design could be the cause based on the findings of the research carried out in the learning field. The country of Nigeria is another illustration of the difference between the discourse in the policy and the real world situation. For instance, according to the National Broadcasting Code, ten percent of the total airtime is supposed to be used for the education broadcasting; however, this is not controlled nor enforced. Only the public broadcasting companies follow this policy as it was mentioned in the code (Omang et al., 2025). The broadcast policies of the country of Nigeria passed three distinct eras in their evolution, namely the golden age of government intervention in the 1970s and 1980s, the neoliberal withdrawal era in the 1990s and 2000s, and the fragmented and strained revamp era now (Omang et al., 2025).



Figure 2: Three Eras of Educational Broadcasting Policy in Nigeria
Sources: Ajadi et al. (2008); Aderinoye (2007); Omang et al. (2025).

Figure 2 summarises the three policy eras outlined above.

Implications for Equity and Access to Lifelong Learning

Equity is yet another factor that comes into consideration in relation to the above-mentioned research. As was stated by Odesola and Bernice (2024), the function of educational broadcasting is not only limited to raising literacy levels because of the inadequate infrastructure, the availability of plenty of foreign content, and the absence of any policy that can allow educational broadcasting to have such an effect in relation to all people living in Nigeria. In the case of Aiyegusi (2022), although awareness about educational radio shows is quite widespread in the rural areas, the awareness is almost never utilized due to the lack of local language and timing of the broadcasts.

One more problem influencing the phenomenon in question is the geographical and gender inequality. As stated by Dauda (2019), one of the socioreligious dynamics of Northern Nigeria is the necessity of permission from men because they view this content as alien to their culture; the regional study conducted by UNICEF (2020) proves that female participation in the radio literacy programs in Northern Nigeria is below 50% of the national average. These inequalities have been noticed in the total environment of distance learning institutions in Nigeria, where there are inequalities in terms of facilities available to the students for receiving education through distance learning in single-mode universities as well as dual-mode universities, such as NOUN and Obafemi Awolowo University, in terms of facilities and technology. From the above-discussed literature, it is quite clear that educational broadcasting has influenced different societies in their own ways as some societies have been highly influenced by the educational broadcasting. These societies include rural societies, women, illiterate societies, and poor societies.

Theoretical Framework

The two theories which are applied in this paper include the theory of diffusion of innovations proposed by Rogers (1995) and the theory of andragogy proposed by Knowles (1980).

As per the theory of diffusion of innovations by Rogers, the diffusion of innovation in society as well as the five factors that influence its adoption, including relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, are analyzed. The application of the theory also helps explain the reasons behind the rapid adoption followed by the stagnation of the educational broadcast system in Nigeria. Firstly, the combination of factors including relative advantage, compatibility with everyday life, low levels of illiteracy and low complexity is the reason for the rapid adoption period observed in the golden years of the 1970s and 1980s (Omang et al., 2025). However, as per the diffusion of innovations theory, there should be certain communication channels that provide two-way feedback between the adopters and innovators. In turn, Ezema (2015) claims that the one-way communication channel observed in most of the educational broadcasts in Nigeria is a barrier in diffusion of innovations theory.

It can be stated that andragogy theory is complemented with diffusion theory since the first stresses design of learning materials whereas the second stresses only diffusion of the medium. In accordance with the theory of andragogy, adults are self-motivated and, hence, good learners who have life experience and can be motivated to learn successfully if the material to be learned is connected with the problem solving and environment instead of pedagogy where learners learn from the teacher. Being part of the interactive media, the workbooks have turned out to have more completion rates than those of linear media broadcasts (Omang et al., 2025). This is because the approach falls within the andragogy theory and supports the hypothesis that the cause for the low levels of participation by adults when utilizing educational broadcasts in Nigeria may have been caused by the nature of the media broadcasts which are didactic. The two theories fall under the assumption that the failure of the educational broadcasts in Nigeria is caused by the environment and the instruction design. Considering the fact that this research will depend on the theories, the two will be used in this current study.

Methodology

The methodology that is employed in this research is the qualitative desk review and content analysis methodology, which is quite appropriate for the purpose of conducting the review-type research since synthesis of literature on the issue in question is required in such studies. The methodology has already been used in previous literature reviews of educational broadcasting in Nigeria, where documentary review and literature review have been conducted to identify trends of policies and funding (Amadi, 2016; Omang et al., 2025).

Sources of information have been chosen through targeted searches in academic databases and open sources such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and ERIC using the following keywords: "educational broadcasting", "Nigeria", "lifelong learning", "distance education," and "equitable access". Sources of information have been chosen according to the following criteria: (a) peer-reviewed/institutional publications, (b) related to educational broadcasting, distance learning and adult literacy in Nigeria, and (c) published within the past two decades (2005-2025). It also made possible identification of core references relating to the historical research of educational broadcasting in Nigeria (Ajadi et al., 2008); declining use of educational broadcasting (Aderinoye, 2007; Amadi, 2016); effectiveness of current programs (Aiyegusi, 2022); comparative analysis of organizations (Olatunji & Adebisi, 2021) and cultural aspects of broadcasting (Odesola & Bernice, 2024).

The search yielded a total number of 87 results. Of these, 62 abstracts and titles were evaluated for suitability after removal of duplicate results, 34 for eligibility, and 22 for the final review. Results that do not address the problem in Nigeria, prior to 2005 (except historical), and lack academic significance have been excluded from the review. The exclusion criteria are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: *Search-to-Inclusion Summary*

Stage	Number of sources
Records retrieved from database and open-source searches	87
Screened after duplicate removal	62
Full texts assessed for eligibility	34
Included in final thematic analysis	22

All sources finally chosen for the analysis were critically coded based on the following four categories, namely: (i) History of educational broadcasting, (ii) Decline - reasons and evidence, (iii) Policy and regulation, and (iv) Access equity. The consistency of the coding was maintained by the coder himself/herself who coded all the sources after two weeks again and again.

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Consistency was observed only in those sources which related to more than one category and the problem was solved by re-reading and re-coding the sources based on their primary category. Information similar to more than one source like funding shortage of the adult literacy campaign against the policy objectives was crosschecked from its original source.

The limitation of the thematic literature review approach used in this literature review is that it is based on the utilization of secondary sources that are not independently validated for their validity and representativeness. Given the rapidly changing media and policy environment in Nigeria, some of the conclusions may be outdated at the moment of conducting the literature review. It should be highlighted that the research methodology chosen by the author of this work is highly relevant in regard to the assignment, since the main goal of the research paper under discussion consists in analyzing reduction of educational broadcasting and its effects on lifelong learning through the synthesis of the existing literature.

Discussion of Themes

The abovementioned themes have been developed as a result of the thematic analysis of the above sources: lack of funding, transition from educational broadcasting to commercial broadcasting, lack of technology and infrastructure, and differences among regions and genders. Rather than narrating the history of these themes as presented above, this section aims to explore the dynamics among the four themes and why working separately on each one of them has been incapable of preventing the downward spiral. The four themes will be analyzed in light of their impact on access to lifelong learning.

Under-Funding of Educational Broadcasting

Under-funding seemed to be the one issue that was faced by most organizations from those mentioned above, but what is really important in this situation is not the size of the gap identified but rather the way the money is distributed. Specifically, the money is given to the federal and city programs but there is practically nothing for states and rural programs that need special care (NMEC, 2018). That is why the process of under-funding is twice as bad: both because of the absence of funding and its incorrect distribution.

Shift from Educational to Commercial Broadcasting

The second theme considers the impacts of commercialization but not the history of commercialization. Where there exists a competition among the radio stations for advertisements, the value of educational programs will outweigh that of entertainment programs (Aderinoye, 2007). The impacts can be shown using the difference in compliance of the private and public radio stations (Uyo, 2019) and even though the requirement of ten percent of educational programs is part of the National Broadcasting Code, it serves as an aspirational code of conduct without any compliance at all. The compliance of educational program requirements by the private and public radio stations can be shown in the figure below.

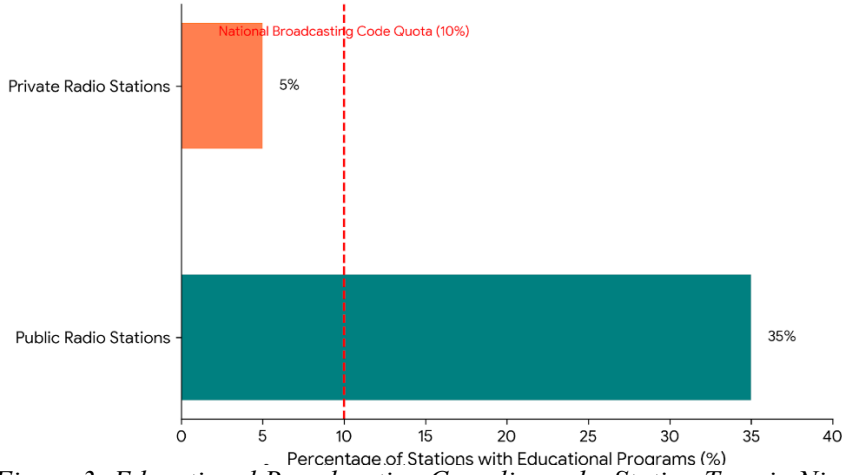


Figure 3: Educational Broadcasting Compliance by Station Type in Nigeria
Sources: Uyo (2019); Omang et al. (2025)

Figure 3 compares educational content compliance across public and private stations

Infrastructure and the Digital Divide

The third challenge is connected with the technical problems because of the existence of the digital divide in Nigeria. Although it is evident that the increasing popularity of radio in educational broadcasting takes place, the issues of electricity and signal quality persist among the rural population (Yakubu, 2018). However, the global trend of digitization and adoption of online learning platforms raises another threat of further marginalizing such communities through the uneven transition of these communities into the digital space that will exclude the role of radio in spreading the information among the communities in question since more than seventy percent of the rural area of Nigeria rely on radio for this purpose (National Broadcasting Commission, 2021, in Omang et al., 2025).

In terms of the infrastructure, one may also consider the inequality in results due to the impact of certain shocks like the ongoing one connected with COVID-19. The pandemic made the educational broadcasting an integral part of the educational system of the country due to the lockdown and closing of the educational institutions, making radio and TV channels emergency classrooms. Nevertheless, even under such a shock, the problems of educational broadcasting were evident despite the recognition of its importance for the country since while some communities did not receive any broadcasts concerning the disease, others had the opportunity to take advantage of it and NGO information from social media (Omang et al., 2025). Pandemics will come into being that will serve as examples in such situations. The demand for educational telecasts will increase exponentially in this case, however, this won't be important considering the quality of the telecast because education depends upon supply rather than demand from the general public. There will be no solution to any problem via a crisis because of insufficient funding.

Regional and Gender Disparities

The fourth pattern, besides mentioned ones, includes the existence of disparity between different regions and gender and the structural decrease in educational broadcasting programs. It was shown that participation in literate radio programs in Northern Nigeria by females does not reach 50% of the national average (UNICEF, 2020) because of sociocultural and religious reasons influencing media usage in some regions (Dauda, 2019). Yet, where programs were scheduled according to cultural and religious requirements and special programs for women organized using the support of religious organizations, participation has increased significantly; thus, it might be

assumed that the disparity results from the programs themselves, not demand absence (Omang et al., 2025).

Interconnection of the Four Themes

These four patterns are not mutually exclusive. The fact is that budget restrictions do not influence production quality only but airtime distribution too, which makes it highly probable that there will be the emergence of a tendency toward the production of commercials because the stations suffering from budget problems will be forced to produce advertisements which would appeal to the advertisers. Poor infrastructure prevents educational programs from reaching the targeted audience, and poor quality of programming is demonstrated by the fact that those people who are disadvantaged sociocultural in the use of radio, such as women living in conservative northern states, face even more problems. Thus, it is necessary to tackle all these issues when solving the problem of the decrease in educational broadcasts in Nigeria.

Theoretical Interpretation: Diffusion and Andragogy Failures

The above themes can be discussed by using the theoretical perspective discussed above. To begin with, by applying the theory of diffusion, it will be observed that the problem occurred during the usage phase and not the adoption phase since the two-way channels of communication which played an important role in the theory were not taken into account when designing the educational broadcast program in Nigeria. Another theory which was not applied in designing the learning material for the adult learners is that of andragogy. This is because of the passive attitude of the learners as well as the active attitude of the teachers in the present educational facilities. But with respect to the interactive classes using workbooks, the performance of the learners increases (Omang et al., 2025).

Implications for Equitable Access to Lifelong Learning

Considering the above problem in terms of the problem of equality of access to lifelong learning in Nigeria, it can therefore be seen that the members of the society who relied on the broadcasting service as the only source of formal learning, especially those living in rural areas, illiterate adults and the conservative women, will be disadvantaged in the coming days on account of this problem. Although there are other forms of education aside from broadcasting, including distance learning through the use of the internet in the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), it follows the same process of distribution as broadcasting (Olatunji & Adebisi, 2021).

Conclusion

It may be observed from the overview of the research provided above that the development of educational broadcasting in Nigeria follows the development and evolution of the technology itself in Nigeria in the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent decline in the 1990s in line with the policy. One may note that the main point of this paper is that the decline of educational broadcasting is the issue related to the policy making, rather than the technological determinism. While it may be argued that the technology is outdated itself, it may also be noted that the technology is being deprived of funds, regulations and instructions at the moment when the digital alternatives are recognized. That leads to two crucial implications. Firstly, there should be a reconsideration of the role of educational broadcasting in the policy of education in Nigeria and its recognition as the key infrastructure for lifelong learning which is supposed to be funded and regulated as such. Secondly, the development of any national digital learning policy should be analyzed in terms of providing or not providing the opportunity for broadcasting to the target population. Otherwise, the shift would become exclusionary in its nature.

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Recommendations

There are seven recommendations which could be put forward to address the deteriorating condition of educational broadcasting and restore its position within the sphere of equitable lifelong learning.

I. It would be essential to allocate to educational broadcasting a minimum percentage of the education budget which would be equivalent to the five per cent currently set aside for adult literacy (Omang et al., 2025).

II. The National Broadcasting Commission should conduct a review of its implementation of the educational quota within the framework of the National Broadcasting Code which is marked by a different performance of private and public broadcasters (Uyo, 2019).

III. Programming should change its didactic nature and move towards creating programs which would be based on adult learning theories. Formats of call-ins, print and workbooks, as well as problem-solving programs are likely to be completed (Omang et al., 2025).

IV. It is important to use media stacking at low costs where radio broadcasts would be accompanied by SMS and mobile groups in rural areas to introduce the element of interactivity (National Broadcasting Commission, 2021).

V. The problem of regional and gender differences should be dealt with through culturally sensitive approaches to intervention, including carrying out programs in languages of women, according to their schedule, and using listening groups consisting of women (Omang et al., 2025).

VI. There is experience from similar developing areas which can be learned from. Community owned rural radio stations in Ghana can help us learn about the benefits of localism and listener-produced content in a multilingual environment, and the usage of radio/mobile mixture in other developing nations shows that it is possible to create an excellent balance between traditional broadcasting and digital approach (Omang et al., 2025).

VII. It is important to pay attention to the evaluation of learning outcomes and not only inputs, and do it together with broadcasting organizations and distance education institutions like the National Open University of Nigeria (Olatunji & Adebisi, 2021).

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