The purpose of this paper is to examine the use of instructional technology in distance education in Nigeria and to trace the historical origins of distance education in Nigeria. There have been various definitions of distance learning and e-learning (Adesoye & Amusa, 2011; Oputa, 2011). In this paper, the researcher would define e-learning as delivery of instruction through electronic media. The researcher would also use distance education as a form of learning that involves less physical contact than the traditional classrooms and communication through electronic means or print. These electronic means include mobile telephones, email, CD-ROM Packages, videophone system, computer, digital library, radio and television broadcasts.

In Nigeria, students involved in distance learning are sometimes referred to as sandwich students or part-time students (Adesoye & Amusa, 2011). They are usually workers or students who were not able to gain admission into the university as the entrance examinations into the various universities are highly competitive and spaces are limited (Adesoye & Amusa, 2011). They usually take a correspondence course during the year. During this time, the instructional materials may be sent through mail or the student would drive to designated centers to pick up the study materials and use the library resources. In Ogbomoso Olanthu University and Tai Solarin University of Education, in addition to the distance education, the students get face to face instruction and spaces are limited (Adesoye & Amusa, 2011). They usually take a correspondence course during the year.

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According to a report cited in Aderinoye, Ojokheta & Olojede (2007), a 2000 report by the Federal Ministry of Education stated that there were 9.3 million students and 3.1 million of these were children that were of school and pre-school age. The literacy rate of the pastoral nomads is 0.28%. The nomads have a mobile school which is easy to assemble and disassemble. Radio and television broadcasts are being used to teach the nomadic children. Mobile telephones are now being proposed to be used to supplement the radio and television broadcasts.

In a survey of 215 distance learners from three open and distance learning institutions in 2008, print media was the most common form of instruction (60.5%). Ofulue (2011). This was followed by radio (13%), email (10.2%), text messaging (4.8%), television (6.3%), online learning was 4.7%, teleconferencing was 3.7% and video conferencing was 0.7%. When the respondents were asked to identify the challenges faced in distance education, 35.8% identified lack of access to information communication technology equipment and 31.6% identified financial constraints as a major factor. Lack of electricity was identified as a major constraint by 26% of the respondents while 20% indicated lack of internet as the major challenge. Some of the ways the respondents coped with these challenges included reading all the course materials and attending tutorials, participating in peer group discussions and using internet at cybercafes and at work. The author concluded that 60.9% of the distance learners had to print hard copies of learning materials or make photocopies of learning materials.

Adesoye and Wintling (2007) examined the relationship of culture and the use of e-learning. The 24 study participants were international students attending a university in the USA and came from 11 different countries. Two of the participants were from Nigeria. The study concluded that there was no relationship between the national culture and the use of e-learning. However, there was a relationship between uncertainty avoidance and the use of the e-learning system. Those who were not familiar with the e-learning system spent more time on the system.

In a study by Okeke (2011) involving 301 lecturers from federal universities, she concluded that amongst lecturers, the use of information technology for communication was the same for both females and males, irrespective of their rank. In addition, she concluded that the gender of the lecturer was not a barrier to the development of information technology in the Nigerian academic field.

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