Capacity Building and Management: The role of ODL Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper first reviews the history of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions in Nigeria and the gap between the supply and demand for educational services using the secondary data from the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board Nigeria. It shows the role of ODL as an effective gap - filler and proposes the strategies for capacity building and management from the supply side for educational services. The inadequacy of infrastructural facilities are discussed and it is argued that ODL institutions should make do with current level of infrastructural facilities, at the same time ensure equilibrium between the available human and material resources and the carrying capacity in the various ODL institutions in Nigeria.

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Introduction

It is truism that education is the greatest social leveler and the most potent for mental and social emancipation. The Nigeria National policy on Education (2004) also stated that 'education is the most important instrument of change in any society and that any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.' Furthermore, government educational policy adopted 'policies which were to be directed towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels; make life-long education the basis for the nation's education policy; and that the education system structured to develop the practice of self-learning' (Jegede 2007). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2004 National policy on education specified the goals for distance education as

- Provide access to quality education
- Opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied
- Meet special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for the employees at their work place
- Encourage internalization especially of tertiary education curricula
- Ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing Nigerians experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work

Despite the well articulated national policy on education, large populations of Nigerians are not yet educated. Nairalad.Net (2006) reported that United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) noted that illiteracy in Nigeria had reached vertiginous heights. Among the twelve countries identified by the report, Nigeria was ranked fifth with the largest number of illiterates within its borders. The others first four were India, China, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Similarly, during the launching of Mass Literacy programme tagged ' Improving Access to Community Education and Literacy, using Radio and Television, the former President of Nigeria Chief Olusegun Obasanjo stated that in spite of the efforts of his administration to fight illiteracy, more than 51% of Nigerians are yet to become literate (Nairaland.net 2006). During Obasanjo's regime many private

universities were accredited to boost university in take in Nigeria. Olayiwola, Reju and Alaneme (2009) reported that about 95 universities are in Nigeria made up of 27 federal universities, 34 state universities and 34 private universities, while Ramon- Yusuf (2010) reported that there one hundred and four universities in Nigerian as at May made up of 27 federal universities, 36 state universities and 41 private universities with the assurance that documents of others are still being processed. These universities have not been able to satisfy the number of applicants aspiring for the universities education. Although, the costs of education the private universities are beyond the reach of most Nigerians. In view of the staggering numbers of applicants that are denied access to tertiary education, the ODL institutions must come to the rescue by providing cost effective and qualitative education for the large numbers of applicants aspiring for higher education.

The objectives of the paper

This paper intends to achieve the following objectives:

a. To investigate the roles of ODL institutions in capacity building and management. To ensure unrestricted access to cost effective and qualitative education.

b. Present the gap between the demand and supply of higher education in Nigeria and

c. Propose the strategies for capacity building.

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections, sections one and two present the history of ODL in Nigeria and the gap between the supply and demand for higher education respectively section three proposed the strategies for capacity building and management, while section four present the summary and conclusion of the study.

History and Development of ODL in Nigeria

The distance education concept is not new in Nigeria although it has taken different forms. Many Nigerian leaders have benefitted one way or another in boosting their academic careers. Mohammed (2000) traced the earliest form to around 1920 when a number of Nigerians had patronized correspondence institutions of the United Kingdom such as Rapid Result Institute, Wolsey Hall,

Pitman's Institute, Cambridge College and the College of Preceptors etc. Most of these institutions operated correspondences courses and they are also recognized examining bodies. The development within the borders of Nigeria was traced to the distance teaching Unit of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria which emerged in 1967, and later renamed A.B.U. Institute of Education in the Northern Nigeria. In 1974 the University of Lagos Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) translated to Correspondence and Open Studies Institute in 1983 and now Distance Learning Institute in the Western Nigeria. Other distance education institutions include the Open Studies Unit of the University of Abuja, the Alvan Ikoku College of Education Adult Education and Correspondence Unit and the Institute of Distance Education Abia State University, Uturu Eastern Nigeria. The National Teachers Institute was established in 1976 to provide in-service education for teachers of different categories using the Distance Learning System (DLS). A large numbers of outreach campuses were established by both polytechnics and universities at various commercial centres in Nigeria. On the other hand Jegede, (2007 & 2009); Reju, Alaneme & Olayiwola (2009) summarized the development of ODL in Nigeria as follows:

- Oxford University extra Mural Studies University College Ibadan 1947
- First Distance Education course on Radio in 1960 by Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)
- Educational Television Programmes of the then National Television of Nigeria (NTV)
- Ahmadu Bello University
  - University of the air 1972
  - Teacher In-service Education Programme (TISEP) in 1975
- University of Lagos
  - Correspondence and open study Unit COSU 1976
  - Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) 1983
  - Distance Learning Institute (DLI) 1997
- The National Teacher Institute 1976
- National Open University (NOU) 1983-1984
- Centre for Distance Learning University of Abuja (1990)

- o (Note that University of Abuja has the mandate to run distance education)
- Part-time/sandwich /outreach programmes by universities etc
- National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) 2002/2003
- University of Ibadan , Distance Learning Centre 2002
- Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife Centre for Distance Learning 2002
- Federal University of Technology Yola Centre for Distance Learning 2002

The 1990s witnessed a lot of increase in the establishment of part time, sandwich programmes by the various tertiary institutions. Olayiwola et al, (2009) reported the abuse of the process when business people hijacked the establishment of satellite and off campuses without any regard for standard. This led the National University Commission (NUC), the regulatory body for the universities in Nigeria to clamp down on the indiscriminate establishment of satellite campuses with mandate for universities not to operate beyond 200 kilometer radius. Millions of students who had secured a place in the satellite campuses were back on the street, hence the emergence of the National Open University of Nigeria in 2002/2003 and the awareness of the possibility of running a dual mode delivery system by the various universities in the country. Since it has become obvious that the existing conventional universities cannot cope with the extremely large numbers of applicants seeking for admission, the emerging ODL must therefore be positioned to cater for these groups of people through appropriate capacity building in the areas of personnel, technology and appropriate infrastructural facilities.

The gap between the supply and demand for higher education in Nigeria

Nigeria is regarded as the most populous African nation with about 140 million people in the recent national census. The high number of applicants seeking for admission in the various tertiary institutions confirmed that the demand for education is significantly higher than the supply that is the space available. Table 1 below showed the statistics of applicants seeking admission and the number of applicants who were offered admission

Table I: Joint Admissions and Matriculation Boards 2002-2008 UME Applications and Admissions Statistics (Ground Totals)

Year	Number of Applicants that applied for admission	Number of applicant offered admission	% of Admission to applications
2002	994380	51,845	5.21
2003	1,046,950	105,157	10.04
2004	841,878	122,492	14.55
2005	916,371	76,984	8.40
2006	803,472	88,524	11.02
2007	911,653	107,370	11.78
2008	1,054,060	Not available	Not available

Sources: www.jambng.com/ume/UMEADM & www.jambng.com/app_ume March 30, 2010

In the table 1 above, the year 2002 recorded the least percentage of the applicants that were admitted, the total applications were 994,380, and only 51,845 were offered admission. It means over 94% of the applicants were denied the opportunity for higher education. The highest percentage of admission was recorded the year 2004 where close to 15% of applicants were actually offered a place in the universities. The National Universities Commission's part of the regulatory framework is to ensure that each university carrying capacity is maintained, otherwise accreditation may be denied. Emunemu (2008) noted that at the end of senior secondary education, the 2001 WAEC report indicated a total of 886, 936 entries in English language (a compulsory core subject) among candidates for the year 2001 examinations. This represented approximately the output of senior secondary for the year. Against this background, the JAMB Report of 2001 admission exercise indicates 128,114 gained admission into higher institutions. The study arrived at the following implications on the basis of WAEC/JAMB statistics as follow:

• Tertiary institutions could only absorb about 14% of the output of senior secondary level.

• In 2001, a total of 758, 822 (86%) candidates who could not be absorbed in tertiary institutions must have headed for the labour market and occupational post-secondary institutions such as schools of health, agriculture, business, engineering and construction (monotechnic) which are outside the control of the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2004).

ODL Institutions as gap filler

Despite the increased number of the universities in Nigeria, it is obvious that they have not been able to offer admission to more than 15% of the applicants seeking admission. The face to face system of delivery required a lot of physical facilities to be put in place e.g. lecture rooms, hostel accommodation, increased number of personnel and a host of other costs. The International Research Foundation for Open learning in its report of a workshop on 'Using Open and Distance learning to Overcome Barriers 2004 concluded that '*concentrating on the traditional methods of education, with their rigidities and high cost can constitute a barrier to achieving the impact required in the other action areas. ODL is therefore an essential component to all action areas.*' Given the level of budget allocation to education in Nigeria, the state and federal institutions may not be able to cope with the huge investments required to accommodate the large number of the applicants.

The alternative approach is the ODL mode of education. The concept of distance education or distance learning has been variously defined for example Keegan (1986) described Distance learning as non- contiguous communication between students and teacher, mediated by print or some form of technology. Perraton (1988) defined DL as the separation of teachers and learners in space and time. Johnson (1992) sees DL as volitional control of learning by the student rather than by the distant instructor. Mbaya (2005) identified seven definitional elements of DL;-

- The quasi permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the process as against face to face interaction on regular classes
- The influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of independent study programmes

- The use of technical media audio video or computer to unite teachers and learners and to carry the content of the course
- The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue
- The quasi permanent absence of learning groups throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals with the possibility of occasional meeting for both didactic and socialization process
- The presence of more technologies than conventional oral education and
- The privatization of instructional learning

Jegede (2007) refers to ODL mode as weapon of mass instruction; it democratizes and liberalizes education; flexible and life-long; quality assured and it includes all; and allows individualized learning at own pace. ODL characteristics include cost-effectiveness system of instructions independent of time location pace and space, used for a variety of learning situations: - primary secondary tertiary vocational and non-formal education; thrives on the economy of scale and focused on quality assurance, instructional packages and students supports. ODL mode of instruction is the only solution to give access to all. The contribution of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, India to university education was reported in Pillai (2009) that over 2.3 million enrolled students (5 years registration period) which represents 17% of students population in India, it offers 3,200 courses and more than 42,000 overseas students. Similarly Pityana, (2009) also reported that a total of 205,811headcount enrollments which included 90% of South Africa nationals, over 9% of other African nationals and less than 1% of other nationals. The current student's population of the National Open University of Nigeria cannot be obtained but it is quite low compare to its counterpart in India and South Africa.

Strategies for Capacity Building and Management

From the discussion in the previous section, it should be obvious that ODL mode of instruction is the panacea for open access for qualitative education. The provision of qualitative education can only be efficiently and effectively done with the appropriate human and material resources. Building appropriate capacity and managing it effectively and efficiently will ensure quality output from the system.

The International Research Foundation for Open Learning (2004) affirmed in its report that capacity building in particular was a critical element in placing developing countries in a stronger position to cope in an increasingly internationalized market. The foundation further suggested the following areas of capacity building:

- ODL infrastructure and capacity building, including support for local content development and learning object repositories.
- Information Technology (IT) hubs and learning centres for out-of-school populations.
- Commonwealth school networking.
- The need to think beyond the target driven Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Management is the process of planning organizing coordinating and directing the activities of human and allocating of material resources with the aim of achieving predetermined goals and objectives of the organization or institution. In achieving the educational goals of the nation, appropriate management tools must be employed for effective and efficient utilization of both human and material resources to attain the goals and objectives, both in the short run and in the long run. Since the importance of ODL as a weapon of mass education has been generally accepted, it will therefore require conscious efforts to effectively annex these resources to attain optimum output in the area of educational services. The strategies for capacity building and management can be broadly classified into two namely: the human resource planning /management and material resources planning/management.

The human resources planning/management

The critical success factor of any system is the quality, experience, integrity and dedication of the available personnel. ODL is relatively new and the knowledge required is different from the conventional face - to – face (F2F) delivery mode. The first challenge for emerging ODL institutions is the ability to train appropriate number of personnel that will effectively and efficiently deliver the ODL services such that the product will be comparable if not better than the conventional face to face. Such training should be directed towards important areas like course design, development, editing, media integration instructional material

development and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Since the expertise is not readily available locally due to the relative newness of the mode, opportunities had to be sought for in other countries where it has operated successfully. The initial training cost will be relatively high if the emerging ODL will actually complied with the international standard. In addition to the training of the personnel, adequate compensation and incentives must be put in place to ensure standard of delivery, unparallel students support services, student counseling, preparation of quality course materials and appropriate assessment method. Mohammed (2000) suggested that quality and quantity of staff must reflect the structural model on which ODL institution is based.

The need for capacity building in the Nigerian ODL mode has been recognized by the policy makers and the international community. There are series of specialized training programmes that are currently going on with selected dual-mode institutions along with the only single mode operating Nigeria. The training tagged 'Train-The Trainer Workshop on E-Teaching for Academic Staff of Distance Learning Centres in the Nigerian Universities' jointly organized by National Universities Commission (the highest regulatory agency for university education in Nigeria) and the British Council with the main facilitator from the Open University, United Kingdom. Five representatives were selected from various emerging ODL institutions in Nigeria who are to anchor the training of other academic staff in their respective Universities. The workshop would be held in at least five phases, two of these had already taken place while the schedule for the remaining phases had been fixed for September, December 2010 and March 2011. Similarly the World Bank/University of Lagos Step B Project in collaboration with Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria had also organized series of workshop on ICT for Teaching for academic staff of the collaborating institutions which had been organized in phases to accommodate many academic staff with the mandate for the beneficiaries to train others with a promise of support from the sponsor (World Bank). The efforts of the Regional Training & Research Institute for Open & Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) in collaboration with Commonwealth of Learning had also organized series of training aimed at capacity building. The latest is the International Workshop on Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation for Open and Distance Learning organized in collaboration with the African Council for

Distance Education (ACDE) and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) with support from the commonwealth of Learning (COL). According to the organizers, the aims of the workshop are to bring together practitioners of Instructional Design and open and distance learning from developing countries in Africa to:

- Apply ISD in a systematic manner for both technology and non-technology related environments;
- Identify major components of the analysis phase and utilize various flowcharts, constructs and checklists for the analysis phase;
- Differentiate between key principles and practices of instructional design and how to apply these to a variety of learning environments; and,
- Systematically utilize ISD and instructional design models in a variety of ODL models.

The massive approach in building capacity in the area of personnel development reveals the seriousness of the policy makers as well as the practitioners to move the ODL to an enviable position in terms of quality, quantity and cost effectiveness.

Material Resources Planning/ Management

Since ODL is a weapon of mass education, material resources particularly the required infrastructural facilities must be properly planned and implemented. The availability of material resources is very central to the success of ODL. Although basic infrastructural facilities are grossly inadequate, but it is now the general consensus that while the government is making efforts to improve the infrastructural facilities the practitioners must endeavor to maximize the use of the available resources for optimum output, otherwise, the long term effect will have a damaging consequence on the socio-economic development of the country. According to the guidelines released by the National Universities Commission, it is required that all academic programmes to be taught by ODL must include interactive tests, supplemented with other resources such as CDROM, DVD, or USB sticks to deliver, e-books, simulations, assessment etc. All study centres across the country are expected to have basic ICT facilities such as internet, reliable power source. The material resources planning must

ensure that the carrying capacity is matched with the available resources at the institutions base as well as the various study centres so that quality is assured.

Summary and conclusion

The study traced the development of ODL from 1920 to date. It showed that while some of the earlier developments could be regarded as correspondence, or part - time studies, the current development in ODL has grown with a lot of sophistication particularly with the level of Information and Communication Technologies that have become important tools in ODL mode of delivery and assessment. The paper showed the gap between the number of applicants seeking a place in the universities in Nigeria, less than 15% of the applicants were absorbed on yearly basis leaving more than 85% roaming the streets. It was pointed out that the 85% can be comfortably absorbed by the emerging ODL institutions in Nigeria if appropriate human and material resources that can assure quality can be put in place. There is the regulatory authority for setting standard for the operations of ODL in Nigeria and for building appropriate capacity to ensure quality, quantity and cost effectiveness. Capacity building and management has led to cooperation with experts from other nations to assist in laying solid foundation for the growth and development of ODL in Nigeria. Although Nigeria is faced with a lot of challenges in the area of infrastructural development but it is suggested that while the government is making efforts at improving the infrastructure, the emerging ODL institutions should make do with the current level, but ensure that their carrying capacity is at equilibrium with the level of facilities available.

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