

IMPACT OF OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING AND LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS IN GHANA'S TERTIARY EDUCATION PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

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Extended Abstract

Open distance learning and learning technologies for developing contexts have provided a gateway for several professionals to embark on studies that enhance both career and professional advancements. Many a developing context in Africa has depended on its tertiary education to provide interventions to mitigate the shortfalls in mobilizing national human resources for development. Ghana's Tertiary Education Project (TEP) was established in 1990 to provide equity, access and quality of tertiary and professional education. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have been adopted as a tool for accessing university and professional programs by developmental states in Africa and South East Asia including Ghana. Is there an impact of Open Distance Learning (ODL) and Learning Technologies (LT) on career development access and success in Ghana's tertiary education project? This study is an evaluation of the impact of open distance learning and learning technologies have made on career development access and success under Ghana's TEP.

Statement of the Problem

Working and studying has been a challenge to many a worker seeking career development in professional development. The TEP provides access to equitable quality tertiary education by via ICT and distance education. Has ODL and LT afforded

in TEP improved the access and success of career development? This study focuses on the career development which is in the context of personal development, and particularly as in relationship with the TEP. The problem identified is that many workers who seek to develop themselves are unable to leave job to pursue tertiary and professional programs, hence their need to have such a national strategy that will let them work and study concurrently.

Hypothesis for the study:

H₀ : ODL and LT have no significant relationship on career development access and success in Ghana's TEP.

Research Method Used

The study used experience survey with questionnaire to elicit requisite information from respondents. Social unit of study was professionals (N=200) who have successfully graduated from Commonwealth Executive Masters offered by distance at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. A 5-scale (Likert) structured questionnaire with 30 questions was pre tested and later administered. Respondents were contacted on who was willing and available bases. A chi-square analysis was used to determine the significance of ODL and LT on access and success of career development tested hypothesis of the study. Sample scope was year 2009 and 2010. Chi-squared analysis which was used to test the hypothesis proved that ODL and LT have significantly impacted on career development access and success in TEP. It is therefore recommended that learning strategies which use Open Distance Learning and Learning Technologies for accessing career development must be employed in development context to enhance the national human resource capacities.

Findings

From literature and experience surveys, there was no ODL system yet in Ghana. However, the flexible distance learning and e-learning technologies were being used in tertiary education at three (3) of Ghana's public five (5) universities. KNUST, UG and

WUE (where fm broadcast was used) excluding UDS, and UCC. A typical participant in the TEP successfully using the quasi open (flexible) distance learning and e-learning technologies was Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi collaborating with the Africa Virtual University (AVU), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Australia and Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), Canada, though a closed system has adopted distance learning and learning technologies to offer flexible learning strategy to those who work-study. University of Ghana (UG), Legon, had collaboration with Chinese government start using e-learning technology for academic work. The other tertiary education institutions University of Cape Coast (UCC), Cape Coast, University of Education (UEW) where FM broadcast were available and University of Development Studies (UDS), Tamale; have not used wide range of learning technologies. It was observed that the national open university of Ghana (NOUG) still remain on drawing board in 2010 since 2008. However, Ghana telecom university college, Accra, fully equipped functions like an Open University in collaboration with Open University of Malaysia. The UK Open University is initiating a Ghana open university which could embark on truly open distance learning.

From the descriptive statistics the background of respondents showed: Female (12%) Male (88%). The larger percentage (60%) of them was in their 40-50s, and in middle management positions. Respondent's occupation showed that they were (10%) top management, (40%) middle management, and (50%) line management. Regarding affordability, all respondents had the capacity to finance their ODL and LT learning (40%) personal savings or (60%) personal loans. Responses showed their work & learn preferences: quit job to study without study leave (3%), stay on job and learn (84%) quit present job to pick one another to study (1%), continue in job without further learning (12%). Most respondents (91%) were employees of cooperate organizations or institutions, or public sector, while (7%) were self-employed, and (2%) unemployed.

Respondents (73%) saw their career advancement delayed or threatened because of lack of professional development. Several (81%) felt their career and professional

development solutions in the TEP and were ready to harness it to enhance their personal development even if their employers would not directly finance it, further would want to use open/flexible distance learning and e-learning. They (95%) however had internet access at home and work to access virtual learning environments. Their ICT competence was adequate for the level of skills required for their access and success.

Conclusion and recommendations

From chi-square analysis study concluded open/flexible distance learning and LT to be having significant influence on access and success of career development. Further, TEP offered the best of opportunities for the professionals in management who wanted to access the CEM programs at KNUST for professional and personal development to advance their carrier. ODL and e-learning offered the best of learning strategies in a development context.

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