

**AN APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DISTANCE LEARNING
PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA HIGHER EDUCATION: SCIENCE AND
LANGUAGE TEACHER PREPARATION**

By

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ABSTRACT

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programme is considered one of the most important educational innovations of the last century. Providing 'useful' opportunities has always been a major intention of ODL. From the beginning of correspondence courses during the first half of the 19th century to the modern conception of ODL in higher education, providing students with useful knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities is the purpose of a successful programme. However, the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into ODL in the last decade makes acquisition of lifelong learning skills also imperative. This study attempts to analyze the implementation of Open and Distance Learning programmes in institutions of Higher Education in Nigeria viz-a-viz National University Commission's minimum standards. Using a qualitative approach in data sourcing, three universities were purposely selected for the study. Data analysis involved simple percentages and frequencies. Results show that ODL teacher preparation programmes have come a long way but have not fully achieved its objectives. The need for a largely technology-driven and integrates ODL programme is called into play.

Keywords:

Open and distance learning, Implementation, Innovations, Life long learning skills, Technology-driven, Teacher preparation.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the issue of capacity building aimed at enhancing the abilities and capabilities of teachers has drawn attention worldwide. The teacher thus remains the main actor in the successful implementation of any curriculum, be it science or language. Adegoke (2003) observes that the whole education system (pre-school, primary, secondary, and tertiary and teacher education) has a crucial role to play in bringing about true learning for empowerment, which transcends mere acquisition of knowledge. Besides, global challenges in terms of digital age and current technological developments, has created new demand and increased investments requiring the maintenance of critical pedagogy through best possible classroom practices. As Obebe(2005:40)succinctly puts it:

“In the new century, the 21st century, the capacity to educate will depend upon our ability to attract recruit and train competent, committed and caring teachers.”

Much of literature such as (Light 1999; Ajeyalemi 2002; Bamidele 2003; Lawal 2008; Owhotu 2008) continue to express the view that the process of global modernity, innovations and day to day realities have prompted the need for a rethinking on how teacher preparation should be organized in meeting societal goals in a more sustainable manner. Delor’s Report to UNESCO (1996) focusing on the four pillars constituting the principles of qualitative education in teacher preparation in the 21st century as learning to know; learning to do; learning to be and learning *to live together*. Unfortunately many communities around the world lack the preparation of teachers and quality education programmes needed to build a sound foundation for a more peaceful and prosperous future. (Obebe, 2005:40) In particular, the role of open and distant education in offering an alternate teacher preparation programmes (pre and in-service) in place of the traditional classroom experience have also received considerable attention in modern literature. This paper therefore aims to analyze ODL programmes in Nigeria higher education in terms of science and language teacher preparation.

Some Related Works on Open Distance Learning

In discussing some of the conceptions of ODL, (Nixon 1992; Searcy et.al.1993; Aderinoye 2002; Adesina 2002; Darkwa& Mazibuko 2000)and others have offered considerations in learning knowledge in ODL in terms of definition, programme design, course development, learner support services life long learning and on-line education. Jamilan (1995) suggests that distance learning frees the learner from time and place and meets his or her specific needs and interest. According to him, distance learning is best administered in an institution referred to as Open University.

Unesco (2005) views distant education as an educational process in which a significant population of teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner. Open learning on the other hand is viewed as an organized activity based on the use of teaching materials, in which the constraints on study are minimized in terms of either access or of time, place, method of study, or combination of these. Further expanding the conception ODL, Gabriel (2000) cited in Ayidi & Ikem (2005) argues that distance learning is not synonymous

with e- learning. According to her, distant learning is a generic term that describes any form of learning other than the traditional instructor-led mode. It includes correspondence courses delivered through the mail as well as electronically.

In discussing the potentials of ODL, Ayadi and Adekoya (2005) asserts that African academics and opinion leaders can use open and distance education outfits and outlets to help solve the educational problems currently confronting and threatening the future of the African continent. They confirmed that establishing and sustaining distance partnerships will assist in fostering the actualization of the much needed jump-starting of the ailing teaching and learning enterprise in Africa. They noted that this could ultimately and in many ways be a prescription for major African illness- poverty. Marx (2008) confirms that ODL is one of the remarkable changes in the global environment and trends that educators must respond to in meeting the objectives of the new millennium.

Darkwa and Mazibuko(2000) acclaims that the majority of distance learners in Nigeria are goal oriented working adults seeking degree or specialized training. ODL therefore serves learners whose life circumstances may not allow traditional classroom setting. Adegoke (2008) agrees with Darkwa and Mazibuko when he suggests that Open University system is one that can help expand opportunities to all learners through open learning. According to him, distance learning is part of open learning, as such today's' Universities is no longer restricted to specific time and place.

In the area of technologies utilized in ODL instruction Brey (1993) reports that the two primary forms of communication utilized to deliver instruction ODL education are synchronous and asynchronous. Distance learning based on asynchronous methods use recorded instructional materials. These types of materials allow learners to be separated in time and distance from the delivery of instruction. Thus telecommunication systems such as broadcast television or electronically stored media such as video conferencing, audio, CD- ROM, cassette recordings and other based curriculum resources are among the technologies utilized in asynchronous communication. On the other hand distance education programme of a synchronous nature use technologies that offer live interactive instruction. The system is interactive because the instructor can see and here the students at all the sites. The students are also able to see and hear on another as well as their instructor (Blakesley&Zahn, 2001).

ODL Initiatives in Nigeria

Developing nations like South Africa, Bostwana, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana to name a few have engaged in initiatives and policies to maximize and exploit the potentials of ODL as alternate avenues to serve the educational needs of non traditional students and working adults. Nigeria the giant of Africa is not an exception. The history of ODL in Nigeria is legendry spanning from the establishment of Open Studies Unit (COSU) in 1973-74 academic session. Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSU) was upgraded to an Institute in April 1983 and then became Correspondence and Open Studies Institute COSIT. In 1997 COSIT was renamed Distance Learning Institute (DLI).

These initiatives are in line with the goals of the National policy as an instrument par excelon for:

- Engendering self reliance, empowerment and creativity
- Enhance cultural vitality
- Facilitate social progress and equality
- Fostering democratic values and individual success
- Engendering scientific and technological advancement (Adegoke 2003).

Furthermore, Section 6 Tertiary Education on National Policy on Education highlights under sub-section B70that:

“Since no education may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given emphasis in all educational planning and development.”

The open and Distance learning programmes in Nigerian Universities are also in conformity with NationalUniversities Commissions accreditation components.

At present, the reading and studying of the printed material course materials can take place in the home, in an environment convenient to the student or at some designated places called Study Centers. These are places located across geopolitical zones of the country.

The practical classes take place at the study centers. Assignments are compulsory features of the course delivery system. All in all, distance education enrollment at Universities in Nigeria has witnessed phenomenal growth over the last decade suggesting that ODL continue to offer alternative to learner’s individual circumstances and educational needs. Against this background, this study attempts to appraise the actual operations of ODL teacher preparation programmes as means of describing, understanding, as well as making judgments and decisions related to its appropriateness/ effectiveness. A curriculum that is worth its salt, should be worthwhile and relevant (Adegoke,1987).

Theoretical Framework

The National Universities Commission Programme Evaluation Model for Open Distance Learning will be used. This model is useful in explaining the present challenges facing ODL teacher preparation in Nigeria Higher Education. The theoretical components of this model comprise the various aspects of distance education in terms of:

- Philosophy, vision, mission and objectives
- Admission requirements
- Curriculum design
- Course Materials
- Staffing
- Learner Support
- Administration
- Internal Efficiency
- External Efficiency
- Students Welfare and Counseling

- Funding Evaluation
- Quality assurance
- Use of information and communication technologies

Rational for the Study

Teacher preparation in ODL has been on in some Nigerian Universities for almost a decade. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, it is important to note that a comprehensive appraisal of teacher preparation programme in ODL has not been undertaken in Nigeria. Tanner (1966) asserts that a new program must be regarded as an experiment and the proffered solution as hypothesis until they have withstood the test of time. This study is set to bridge this gap.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studies Bamidele (2003); Dibiase (2000) acknowledges that there is tremendous evidence of achievements, in ODL particularly in growth rate, application of technologies and other support services. However, despite these efforts, Ayade and Ikem (2005) observe that there has been a perceptible decline in the quality of teacher preparation in ODL in Nigeria over the years. They claimed that there exist a dangerous mismatch between society's investments in ODL teacher preparation and society's expectations from it. This view is echoed by Obebe (2005:45) who acknowledges that teacher preparation for schools in subject areas such as social studies, sciences and Arts and Social Sciences should be looked into. Such informed statements give strong indication that a call for the assessment of ODL programmes in Nigerian higher education is not only imperative but urgent. More so the acquisition and sustainability of knowledge, life long learning skills and attitudes in science and language preparation is of crucial importance to technological advancement and hence national development.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to:

Investigate the extent to which effective implementation of science and language teacher preparation has been achieve in Nigeria Universities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions which this study addressed are:
In Broad terms:

1. How effective is the implementation of teacher preparation in ODL programme based on NUC standards?

More specifically:

- a) Will there be a significant difference in NUC standardization and ODL Science and Language teacher preparation programmes?
- b) How adequate are the curricula contents in ODL Science and Language teacher programmes n Nigerian Universities?

- c) How adequate are the quantity and quality of resources (human and material) in use in ODLteacher preparation.
- d) What are the most crucial constraints to effective implementation of ODLI teacher preparation?
- e) How adequate are the methods of ODL teacher preparation in Nigerian universities.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative approach in data sourcing, but also used interpretative perspective in the study analysis (Berg, 1989). Demographically there were thirteen Universities in Nigeria operating full distance learning programme and those constituted the population of the study. The study focused on the Universities that have a fairly similar type of implementation structure. Out of the thirteen Universities, three Universities were purposely selected for detailed survey as follows:

- University of Lagos, Lagos
- University of Ibadan, Ibadan
- University of Abuja, Abuja.

The first two Universities are first generation universities in the country while the last one is the third generations of universities in the country. Apart from the long history of operating ODL in these two first generation universities, they have the largest number of students' enrollment in the country and the largest staff strength. The University of Abuja was included in this study to provide comparative data on new and old Universities.

Sample

A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 60 course facilitators in the selected Universities during the 2007/2008 session. The total number of students involved in the study was 30. The choice of the sample was informed by the awareness of the peculiarity of problems based on location and age of the institutions. Comparisons from these divergent geographical settings will enhance the generalization of the study to other contexts.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire designed by the researchers consisted of three sections. Section A measured demographic information. Section B contained nine sub-heading with 34 items rated on a 5 point Likert (scale) ranging from strongly agree, agree, undecided, strongly disagree and disagree. Section C consisted of two open-ended questions that reflected the respondents thinking about the teacher preparation programme. Also secondary data were obtained from the following sources: records and documents; direct observation; in-dept interviews and focus discussions with students and principal officers from National Open University (NOUN) Headquarters, Lagos. These secondary data was supplanted with data from the files in various departments and in some of the universities selected for detailed study. To collect information on the financial status of the selected

universities, some selected university bursars were interviewed. On the whole, in-depth interviews were conducted with the following people; directors, facilitators, some staff and students.

Reliability and validity of the Instruments

The content validity was employed to validate the items through a pilot study using two lecturers in English Education and two facilitators in ODL. The text-retest reliability was calculated by re-administering the questionnaire to the original sample after a two-week period. The coefficient gave a scale of 0.82. The University of Lagos DLI programme. Content validity will be done by their experts in science and language education.

Procedure

- a) Initial visits to institutions to establish rapport.
- b) Subsequent visits to administer questionnaire, interviews on students and officers
- c) Content analysis of Materials
- d) General discussions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data involved quantitative and qualitative analysis. The responses collected from 60 facilitators from 3 universities were collated and analysed accordingly using simple percentages and frequencies.

Table 1: Comparison of the Ratings of the Philosophy and Objectives of ODL in the Universities

S/N	Philosophy & Objectives of ODL	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	Philosophy and vision well understood and well defined	20 (100%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	-
2	Mission and objective clearly understood	18 (10%)	1 (50%)	1 (5%)	20 (100%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	-
3	Philosophy, mission, vision and objective of ODL are attainable within the time	20 (100%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	-	16(100%)	-	4 (20%)

NOTE:

P = Positive rating N = Negative rating U = Undecided
 * Percentages in brackets

Table 1 above shows that the philosophy, vision, mission and objectives of ODL are clearly defined and understood by all stake holders in the

three universities sampled. The table showed that all the three universities rated all the items high with only 4 respondents representing 20% at University of Abuja having a divergent opinion about the clarity of the philosophy and objectives of ODL programme.

Table 2: Comparison of Admission Requirements for the ODL Teacher Preparation Programme

S/N	Admission Requirements	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	Requirement clearly defined	15 (75%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	-	17 (85%)	-	3 (15%)
2	Allow learners to be separated the time and distance	12 (60%)	8 (50%)	-	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	-	20 (100%)	-	-
3	Oriented towards working adult	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	14 (70%)	4 (20%)	2 (20%)	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	-
4	Helping to solve Nigeria educational problems	10 (50%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)	8 (40%)	6 (30%)	6 (30%)	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	-

Table 2 above shows in terms of frequencies and percentages the ratings of the admission requirements for students for ODL teacher preparation programme.

Research Question (a)

Will there be a significant difference in NUC standardization and ODL science and language teacher preparation programmes?

To answer research question (a), results in Table 2 were used. The results show that all the three universities rated the entry requirements as adequate as each of the items recorded at least 50% positive rating by the respondents.

Ratings of item 4 positively at both Unilag and UI are not as high as that of University of Abuja depicting that the respondents do not subscribe totally that standardization by NUC will help solve Nigeria educational problem.

Table 3: Comparison of the Ratings of the Adequacy of the Curriculum of ODL by the Universities

Item S/N	Rating of ODL Curriculum	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	ODL curriculum too restricted	18 (50%)	8 (40%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	16 (80%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)
2	Philosophical principle behind ODL programme outdated	9 (45%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	14 (70%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	8 (40%)
3	Curriculum is largely technology-driven	11 (55%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	12 (60%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	10 (50%)

Table 3 above shows in terms of percentages and frequencies the opinion of the respondents from the three universities on the adequacy of the curriculum of ODL.

Research Question (b): How adequate are the curricula contents in ODL science and language teacher programmes in Nigeria universities?

Results in Table 3 was used to answer research question (b). Table 3 showed that the opinions of the respondents as regards the adequacy of the curriculum differ from one university to the other. 50% of the respondents in Unilag rated the curriculum as too restricted while the majority of respondents in UI, i.e. 80% think otherwise while the respondents in UniAbuja were mainly indifferent on the restrictiveness of the curriculum.

Similarly, while the majority of the respondents (45%) from Unilag believed that the philosophical principles behind the ODL programme, the respondents from UI and UniAbuja pooled 70% and 40% respectively in support of the principle as it is currently.

The opinions of respondents on item 3 in Table 3 were also divergent. While 55% of Unilag respondents agreed that the curriculum is largely technology driven, 50% of respondents from UniAbuja disagreed and 60% of UI respondents were not certain. It can therefore be concluded from results in Table 3 that the adequacy of the ODL curriculum in Science and Language teacher programmes in Nigerian universities is contentious and viewed differently by individual university.

Table 4: Rating of Adequacy of ODL Course Materials

Item S/N	Rating of Course Materials	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	Institution provided adequate materials for ODL learners	11 (55%)	5 (25%)	4 (20%)	6 (30%)	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	5 (25%)	-	15 (75%)
2	Textbooks, CD-Rom, Audio-video tapes & compact discs are designed by the institution	4 (20%)	-	16 (80%)	1 (5%)	-	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	-	19 (95%)
3	ODL delivers lectures through radio and television with study materials from audio, radio tapes and discs.	3 (15%)	-	17 (85%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	1 (5%)	19 (95%)
4	Recommended textual materials are not readily available.	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	15 (75%)	-	1 (5%)	19 (95%)	-	5 (25%)	15 (75%)

Table 4 above shows the rating of ODL course materials availability in the three universities in terms of frequency and simple percentages.

From Table 4, 55% of Unilag respondents stated that adequate materials are available for ODL learners while respondents from UI and UniAbuja disagreed as the recorded 50% and 75% respectively stating that adequate materials are not available to ODL learners.

Table 4 also shows that 80%, 95% and 95% of the respondents from Unilag, UI and UniAbuja respectively stated that the institutions do not design the textbooks, CD-Rom, Audio-video tapes and compact discs for the ODL programme. It shows that the respondents were unanimous on this item that the institutions do not have inputs in the designing of the materials.

Respondents were also unanimous in their responses to items 3 and 4 in Table 4 as shown by the corresponding high percentages. On item 3 in Table 4, it was observed that 85%, 100% and 95% of Unilag, UI and UniAbuja disagreed that ODL delivers lectures through radio and television using study materials from tapes and discs. In a similar manner, the respondents from the three universities disagreed that recommended textual materials are not readily available as depicted by 75%, 95% and 75% recorded respectively by Unilag, UI and UniAbuja under negative rating (N) in Table 4.

Table 5: Rating of Adequacy of Staff for ODL Programmes in the Universities

Item S/N	Rating of Staffing	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	Most staff are professionally trained	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	13 (65%)	3 (15%)	6 (30%)	11 (55%)	4 (20%)	11 (55%)	5 (25%)
2	Some institutions lack competence	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)	9 (45%)
3	Periodic training for ODL instructors	5 (15%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	10 (50%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)
4	Staff members are on part-time basis	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	13 (65%)	12 (60%)	4 (20%)	4 (20%)
5	Staff population adequate	11 (55%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	10 (50%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	13 (65%)

Table 5 shows the rating by respondents of the staffing for ODL teacher programme in terms of frequency and percentages.

Research Question (c): How adequate are the quantity and quality of resources (human and materials) in use in ODL teacher preparation?

On the adequacy of staff for ODL programme, Table 5 shows that while 55% of Unilag respondents said adequate numbers of staff are available, only 30% of the UI respondents shared same view but those of UniAbuja said there is gross inadequacy of teaching staff as depicted by 65% of them opining negative rating to item 5 in Table 5. Table 5 shows that

the quality of staff is low as depicted by the high negative ratings of item 1 of 65% and 55% respectively of respondents from Unilag and UI while 55% of respondents in UniAbuja were undecided. Also in Table 5, 20%, 20% and 40% of the respondents from Unilag, UI and UniAbuja respectively stated that some instructors of ODL teacher programme are incompetent. This presupposes that many competent instructors teach ODL programme since the percentages are low when compared to those that rated competency of staff low.

Table 5 further showed under item 3 that training programme for ODL instructors is hardly conducted. Only 25% and 10% of respondents from Unilag and UI respectively agreed that periodic training for ODL instructors do take place while 50% of UniAbuja respondents attested to regular training programme been carried out for ODL instructors. In Table 5 under item 4, it was observed that most of the ODL instructors in UniAbuja are on part-time basis (60%) while fewer number of part-time ODL instructors is recorded for Unilag and UI where 20% and 25% respectively stated that part-time ODL instructors exist. The adequacy of staff in terms of quantity and quality are not the same in ODL programme of the universities. It seems that the inadequacy is more pronounced in UniAbuja than the other two universities.

Table 6: Appraisal of Methods of Teaching ODL Programme

Item S/N	Methodology	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	Teachers use varieties of materials	1 (5%)	-	19 (95%)	-	-	20 (100%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	17 (85%)
2	Method of course delivery does not encourage life interactive instruction	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	17 (85%)	-	1 (5%)	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	16 (80%)
3	Large student population makes demonstration of ODL courses difficulty	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	14 (70%)	-	-	20 (100%)	-	-	20 (100%)
4	Allows learners to be separated in time and distance	3 (15%)	-	17 (85%)	-	1 (5%)	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	18 (90%)
5	Learners are well-motivated to attend lecturers regularly	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	16 (80%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)	16 (80%)	7 (35%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
6	Learners have adequate competence in the use of interactive multi-media delivery	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	13 (65%)	-	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	-	2 (10%)	18 (90%)

Table 6 shows in terms of frequencies and percentages the ratings of the methods of teaching ODL programme in the three universities.

Research Question (d): How adequate are the methods of teaching ODL in Nigerian universities?

To answer research question (d), results in Table 6 were used.

Results in Table 6 showed a similar trend throughout the six items and in all the three universities. It was observed that negative ratings (N) recorded the highest percentages in all cases.

Specifically, respondents in all the three universities observed that teachers do not use variety of methods in course delivery and that learners do not have adequate competence in the use of multi-media course delivery. Furthermore, they agreed that methods of teaching encourage life interactive instruction while students large population does not affect demonstration during ODL course delivery. Respondents also unanimously stated that students are not well motivated to attend lectures regularly and also do not agree that learners are separated in time and distances from delivery of instructions as depicted by results under items 4 and 5 in Table 6.

Table 7: Evaluation Procedure of ODL Programme

Item S/N	Evaluation	UNILAG			U.I.			UNIABUJA		
		P	U	N	P	U	N	P	U	N
1	There is provision for regular evaluation of learners programme	11 (55%)	4 (20%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	13 (65%)	5 (25%)	-	15 (75%)
2	ODL programme in Science and Arts has achieved its objectives	6 (30%)	5 (25%)	9 (45%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	10 (50%)	5 (35%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
3	The present role of ODL teacher preparation requires modification to meet specific needs of learners	7 (35%)	4 (20%)	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	12 (60%)

Table 7 above shows in terms of frequencies and percentages the rating by respondents of ODL programme. Item 1 of Table 7 shows that 55% of Unilag respondents believed there is provision for regular evaluation of learners programme while UI and UniAbuja that respectively had high negative ratings of 65% and 75% signified that no provision for regular evaluation of learners of ODL programme. Table 7 equally shows that item 2 elicited similar responses from the three universities in which negative ratings of 45%, 50% and 55% were recorded. It implies that ODL programme in science and arts has not achieved its objectives. Furthermore, Table 7 shows under item 3 that 35%, 40% and 25% were respectively recorded by Unilag, UI and UniAbuja under positive ratings. It implies that only few respondents think that there is a need for modification of ODL teacher preparation programme as presently obtainable.

Results of the Interview

To further validate the responses from the questionnaire, some students in ODL programme were interviewed. The general trend of opinion of the interviewees were summarized below:

Respondent A agrees that:

The standard and quality of courses offered in ODL is very high. I compare very well with my colleagues in conventional university. This is why I have now registered for my Masters programme.

Respondent B notes that:

The major problem has to do with the facilitators. They miss a lot of lectures during the weekends only to stress us out during residential. They need a balance to help us internalize the teaching.

Respondent C noted that:

The delays in releasing results is getting out of hand. Imagine, it took eight months for my final results to be out.

Respondent D feels that:

The authorities should look into the cost of tuition and other internal payments. It is simply outrageous because some of us are adults without jobs.

Respondent E agrees that:

Instructional materials are scarcely available. There is nothing like audio/video tapes, CD-ROMs, or electronic transmission materials. We use only our books and lecture materials.

Discussion

Five research questions were raised to provide a complete picture and detailed understanding of the various aspects of Open Distance Learning in Nigeria. Results show that ODL programmes have come a long way but have not fully achieved its objectives. Moreover, the demographic reality of students from diverse background demands competent staff strength to deal with the multiple needs and demands of students. In addition universities can enhance the new mode of quality higher education through adequate training of staff in ODL pedagogy.

The responses of the subjects also exposed the dearth of delivery methods-materials such as ICT facilities, television and radio broadcast as well as electronic transmission of materials in multimedia. Another dimension to this problem is that some of the facilitators are ignorant of the use of these facilities. The implication becomes obvious when we consider that Nigeria is still light years away from internationally accepted standard in ICT as our electricity is still epileptic and cannot therefore be relied upon. Without a steady power base, the internet, the television, the radio and all other aids needed for the programme will hardly function.

The respondents unanimously complained about the high cost of the tuition fees. The implication is obvious when we consider (May and Komane, 2001) assertion that:

“None of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have fulfilled the promise of providing education to the entire population through conventional education system. It is in this context that distance education is viewed as an appropriate method of education delivery. Distance education is able to provide people who have missed an educational opportunity at one level or another to recapture what they have lost without necessarily going back to the classroom”.

There is need to ensure that projects of this nature go beyond high sounding ambitions. They have to be matched with realistic fees and workable materials. It is not an understatement to surmise that most of the infrastructure are totally inadequate for the needs of the present day and age. For these institutions to be relevant among their peers in developed world they must provide adequate management involvement and support

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

For Nigeria universities to capture the promise of ODL, every component of the programme must be largely technology driven and integrated through computer networks. The use of the Internet should be encouraged as a means of interaction with lecturers. There is need for massive production of study packs, CD-ROMs and other workable materials. With the redefinition of ODL as pacesetters, we need to improve on the quality of instruction and research in the existing institutions. Implicitly qualified experts in handling distance education should be recruited as facilitators. The emphasis should be on producing open university graduates that will have the technical know-how to face the challenges on today's world. Above all, part of the efforts and resources being expended on unserious political issues can be channelled into these institutions for optimum results.

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