

INFLUENCE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING ON ACCESS AND QUALITY OF ENTRANTS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN LAGOS STATE

Rotimi Michael AKANDE
National Open University of Nigeria.

Abstract

The study examined the influence of Open and Distance Education on access and quality of entrants to University Education. In particular the study examined the extent to which distance education has improved access to universities and whether improvement in access has led to decline in quality entrants in universities. It also sought to know whether differences existed in terms of quality of entrants between Dual and Uni -mode distance learning university. Three research questions were raised and three hypotheses formulated. Descriptive research design of the survey type was used. The population of the study comprised distance education students in the two public universities in Lagos state and National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos.

A simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. An instrument tagged Influence of Distance Education on Access and Quality Questionnaire (IDEAQ) was used to collect data from the subjects. The instruments were validated by colleagues in the area of measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistical tool. The researcher administered ten copies of the questionnaire on DLI students of University of Lagos. The result of the analysis is 0.77% showing that the instrument is reliable. Data collected for the study were analyzed using Chi-square (X^2) and t-test statistical tools. The study revealed that Distance Education has influenced access and quality of entrants to universities in Lagos State. The study further reveals that Distance Education has improved access in both uni-mode and dual mode universities in Lagos State. This is a positive and strong effect on university Education through distance learning.

Key words- Distant Education, Influence, Entrants, Dual Mode, Uni –Mode

Introduction

In different countries of the world, education is accorded recognition. This is perhaps due to its effect on the socio-economic and political development of a Nation. In Nigeria, the priority given to education is encapsulated in the National

Policy on Education which states that education is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development, It added further that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change and that any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be proceeded by educational revelation (FRN, 2004). In the same vein, Ade-Ajayi (2001) sees higher education of which university is a sector as a “catalyst” to stimulate other levels of the educational system and enhance its contribution to the development of the whole educational system, through improved teacher education, curriculum development and educational research.

However, the demands for university education in developing countries particularly in Nigeria is extremely hard pressed to meet.

The limitation of spaces in the universities imposes restrictions on access.

According to the National Bureau of Statistic (2016), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) received 11,703,709 applications between 2010 and 2016 while a total of 2,674,485 students were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT between 2010 and 2015. In 2010, a total of 1,513,940 applications were received while 423,531 students were admitted.

This represents only 28% of students who applied for admission and were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT in the year under review.

This prevailing situation leaves one in no doubt that Open and Distance Education (ODL) is the way to go not just for now but for the future. Managers of conventional Universities have also realized this and had made structure adjustments to be able to meet the new challenges (Okebukola, 2008).

In Nigeria, distance education has become fully integrated into Nigeria higher education system. This is indicated in the National Policy on Education where the goals of Open and Distance Education are articulated thus;

- i. Provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been deprived.
- ii Meet special needs of the employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employee at their work place.
- iii Ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing expert as teachers/lecturers regardless of their locations or places of work (FRN 2004,)

Presently, the National Universities Commission has approved some universities like University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Abuja, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Maiduguri and Modibo Adamawa University of Technology Yola as dual mode distance learning universities. The dual mode institutions combine both conventional and distance education modes of

instructional delivery. In dual mode universities, students come for residential programmes when regular students are on vacation. In addition to the dual mode distance learning universities is the National Open University of Nigeria which is the only uni-mode distance education in Nigeria.

Okebukola (2009) states that Open implies “removing barrier to learning such as restriction on time or place of study” while Distance means “the learner and the tutor are physically separated from each other and teaching takes place via print, electronics and/or telecommunications

These terms are defined and explained by the Commonwealth of Learning (2003) as follows:

- **Accessibility:** Education is made accessible to those who cannot attend regular classes due to social, structural or personal situations such as lack of places in educational institutions, distance from educational institutions and family, and work commitment.
- **Flexibility:** Learners determines time, pace and place that suit them and subjects, courses and programmes that meet their needs.
- **Learner Centeredness:** ODL is learner – centered because of its - Philosophy of accessibility and flexibility - Provision of good quality learning materials in learner friendly formats; and - Provision of adequate learner support system.

According to Enaohwo (2009), ODL gives the right opportunity or means of making education available within the reach of every citizen of a nation. Also, Aderinoye and Ojokheta (2004) believed that the problem of unsatisfied demand for education versus actual supply of educational services contributed to the acceptance, growth, and implementation of distance education programme in Nigeria as a means to bridge the gap between demand and supply. Ajayi and Adeniji (2009) rightly observed that increases in enrolment by world standard in open universities are quite high.

Despite the proliferation and benefits of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Nigeria, the quality of delivery and infrastructure has been a major concern to stakeholders Osuji (2014).

The basic characteristic of ODL is the separation of teacher and learner in space and time.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) which is the Supervisory Agency of University Education in Nigeria, in an attempt to ensure that standards are maintained in the operations of distance education, enacted some regulations, one of which is the stipulation of entry requirements. Besides that, ODL study centres are required to offer both academic and social support for the students and that students should have easy access to ICT facilities such as functional internet, for learning purposes, (NUC, 2013).

Operationally, ODL is a formal education system that deploys ICT facilities to

communicate, teach, coach and facilitate productive learning amongst students who are domiciled in distant locations. Such education system is said to be open because students are not limited by such conditions/factors like age, sex, pregnancy, work, race, religion and so on. It is an education that is open for human development. Human Development is the process of nurturing human beings to experience optimal cognitive, affective and psychomotor development, such that the individual is able to achieve self-actualization within the shortest period of time.

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world with almost 168 million people, 30 million of which are students (Ayodele, Jonathan, Odukoya and Azeta, 2014).

Achieving Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Education For All (EFA) Goals are something Nigeria dearly seeks to achieve but there is paucity of quality academic staff and facilities in virtually all institutions, particularly in the critical areas of science and technology (Ayo, et al, 2014).

Nigeria has the challenges of both access and quality of admission seekers occasioned by poor funding and inadequate manpower/infrastructure at various levels of institutions (Ayo, et al, 2014).

The continuous technological advancement powered by the internet and the huge impact on learning has brought about a paradigm shift in education (Ayo, et al, 2014). The application of ICT-based learning has also provided opportunity for ODL to provide quality university education in Nigeria.

However, the type of ODL institutions that is, whether dual mode or uni-mode could also be a factor in determining the level of access and the quality of the entrants into the universities. For instance, in dual mode distance learning universities, the existence of face-to-face interaction coupled with residential programmes could limit access to the university when compared to uni-mode distance learning university. This is because uni-mode distance learning institutions depend on interaction with students with the aid of technology

Statement of the Problem

Between 2010 and 2016 only 2,674,485 students out of 11,703,709 applicants were admitted into the university across the 36 states. National Policy on Education (2004) detailed that the goal of distance learning should be to provide access to quality education and equity in education opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied admission. Thus, open and distance education has historically been advanced as both a major means of upgrading the access to university education and succor for those who were denied access to the conventional system of university education in Nigeria. However stakeholders in education sector are still very much concerned over the limited access to

university in Nigeria yet in doubt over the quality of entrants and education delivered through distance learning. It's against this background the study seek to ascertain the influence of open and distance education on access and quality of entrants into universities in Lagos State.

Purpose of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which distance education has increased access to university education.
2. To investigate whether increment in access has led to decline in the quality of entrants into universities
3. To ascertain whether difference existed between the quality of entrants in dual and uni -mode distance learning universities.

Research Questions

- To what extent has distance education increased access to universities education?
- What is the effect of increased access on quality of entrants in distance education universities?
- Is there any difference in terms of quality of entrants between dual mode and uni-mode ODL in Lagos State?

Research Design SI

The population comprised all the university students in open and distance education mode in Lagos State. The University of Lagos and National Open University of Nigeria were purposefully selected because they are most populous in ODL programme and are easy to access. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents from the Faculty of Education in each of the two universities totaling 200.

A questionnaire titled "The Influence of Distance Education on Access and Quality in Public Universities in Lagos State (TIDEAQPU) was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into four sections namely; section A, B, C, D Sections A contains respondents bio-data such as Age, Gender, Programme of Study, Marital Status, School and Employment Status. Section B contains 15 items to elicit responses on Access to university education with desire responses of "strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). Section C consists of 8 items designed to ascertain the effect of increased access on quality of entrants in distance learning universities. Section D consists of 10 items designed to ascertain the differences between dual mode and uni-mode universities in Lagos State with options "Strongly Agree (SA) , Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (A)

The instrument was validated by colleagues in the area of measurement and

evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was also determined using Cronbach Alpha statistical tool. The researcher administered ten copies of the questionnaire on DLI students of University of Lagos. The result of the analysis is 0.77% showing that the instrument is reliable. Data collected for the study were analyzed using Chi-square (X^2) and t-test statistical tools.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: To what extent has distance education increased access to universities education?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on extent in which distance education increase access to universities education

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Distance Education	36	24.00	30.00	54.00	44.2485	5.74019	32.950
Valid N (Listwise)	36						

Bench mark mean = 37.5

Table 1 shows that the mean score calculated 44.2485 obtained which is greater than the benchmark mean set at 37.5. It is therefore concluded that the extent to which distance education improved access to universities education is high.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of increased access on quality of entrants in distance education universities?

Table 2: Effect of Increased Access on Quality in Distance Education Universities

Variables	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Total Frequency	X^2 Cal	X^2 Tab	Df
increased Access	511	423				
Quality in Distance Education universities	337	423	15140	35.79	9.497	4

N= 200, P<0.05

The data on table 2 shows the effect of increased access on the quality of entrants in distance education universities. The Chi-Square (X^2) table value of 9.497 is

less than the calculated Chi-Square (X^2) value of 35.79 at 0.05 level of significance and 4 degrees of freedom. Therefore, there is a relationship between increased in access and the quality of entrants in distance learning universities. The implication is that the increase in access does not lead to decline in the quality of entrants in Open Distance Learning Universities.

Research Question 3: Is there any difference in the quality of entrants in dual mode and uni-mode distance education universities in Lagos State?

Table 3a: t-test on the difference in dual mode and uni-mode distance education universities

	Option	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Quality	Dual mode	45.7800	20	4.27279	.60426
	Uni-mode	43.6050	16	6.15784	.56449

Table 3b

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for equality of means						
									95% confidence interval of the difference	
		F	Sig	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	MeanDifferences	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Quality	Equal variance assumed	8.339	.004	2.276	167	.024	2.17496	.95560	.28835	4.06156
	Equal variance not assumed			2.630	130.553	.010	2.17496	.82691	.53908	3.81084

Significant at 0.05 level

Table 3a and 3b showed that the t-test analyses are significant at 0.05 level. This means there is significant difference in the quality of entrants between dual mode and uni-mode distance education universities in Lagos state as indicated in mean value of 45.7800 and 43.6050 advantaged of uni mode.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of research question one table 1 showed that the extent to which open and distances education increased access to universities education is high. This is in consonant with the national policy on education NPE (2004), which states that the goals of open and distance education are among others to provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied.

Table 2 showed that the effect of increased access on quality of entrants in distance education universities is positive. This means increase in access does not lead to decrease in the quality of entrants in Open Distance Learning Universities. This is in consonant with the assertion of Ajayi and Adeniji (1999), Enaohwo, (2009) that ODL provides

the right opportunity or means of making education available within the reach of every citizen of a nation without compromising the standard of education processes. Okebukola(2002) also emphasized that the admission processes in open and distance learning universities are subjected to NUC regulations and are strictly followed by the students

Result also showed that there is significant difference in the quality of entrants between dual mode and uni-mode distance education universities advantaged of uni mode. This in line with the assertion of Creed, C. (2001) that arrangement for access and delivery of learning in dual-mode is only able to accommodate a limited number of learners. Also the registrations and assessment are mostly subjected to manual exercise while Open University has a potential to accommodate and assess a large numbers of students with the use of information and communication technology.

UNESCO (2002),also asserted that open learning system is the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web presenting approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision. These Free learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners.

Nigeria has not yet taken full advantage of provision of education through an open university which has the potential to increase access to higher education.

Open and distance education can provide needed access for Nigerian who are presently disadvantaged through the conventional educational system. The enthusiasm showed by government and steps taken so far can only be sustained through proper planning and monitored implementation. However, necessary infrastructures, equipment and fund must be available to provide means of communication with students and offering counseling services to them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government should increase the number of distance learning universities in Nigeria and furnished them with adequate human and material resources.
3. Special attention in terms of fund should be given to National Open University of Nigeria to enhance their capacity in terms of access and in quality.
4. Stakeholder in education sectors should create more awareness on the need to embrace ODL programmes in Nigeria

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