Informing the Misinformed: A Critical Analysis of Common Misconceptions of Open and Distance Learning among Conventional University Teachers in Nigeria

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Abstract: Despite the fact that distance education has been integrated into the mainstream of Nigeria's educational system (thousands of those denied in the conventional education were adequately offered admission through the distance learning), this mode of educational delivery is still increasingly misconceived especially by university teachers who were trained through the conventional mode. This study was, therefore, carried-out to ascertain the common misconceptions associated with open and distance learning by university teachers in Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive research design of the ex-post facto type. The population comprised all the university lecturers at Ibrahim Babangida University, Niger State and University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. The sample size comprised one hundred and thirteen (113) lecturers selected through the purposive sampling technique while simple random sampling techniques was used to select fifteen (15) departments (seven from faculties of Education, four from Social Sciences and four from Arts). For participants to qualify for selection, they must have been teaching at least for three years in the distance learning programme, and must have had minimal understanding of the philosophy and modus operandi of open and distance learning. Common misconception of open and distance learning questionnaire (CMODLQ) r=84 was used to collect data which were analysed through simples percentages and cross tabulation. Findings showed that (87 per cent) perceived ODL as a debased form of learning with so much emphasis on individualized rather than group learning. (90 per cent) conceptualised it as less vigorous since the content of learning cannot be adequately covered within short period of face-to-face contact while (70 per cent) claimed that evaluation of learning in ODL is less vigorous due to the consideration accorded the competing demands of learners. These results revealed that much is still needed to be done in order to create enabling environment where ODL programmes would be favourably perceived by university lecturers. Based on these findings, the strategies that can be used by open and distance learning institutions to promote the acceptability of this educational delivery mode as a standard and alternative educational component especially university lectures such as improved teacher-students contact for adequate learning process; joint semester examination for both conventional and ODL students; regular and adequate training for conventional university teachers on ODL operations be taken as a matter of priority were suggested. The paper also advocated for adequate quality control measures to be taken by an independent body like National University Commission (NUC) so as to encourage patronage of ODL in Nigeria and competencies of the students in the ODL programme.

 Keywords: Common Misconceptions, Critical Analysis, Informing the Misinformed, Open and Distance Learning, University Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is the most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa with about 140 million people (National Population Commission, 2007), occupying a landmass of about 923,768 square kilometers and with over 274 ethnic groups making up the federation. The social and economic dimensions of providing education for the population, within the context of prevailing national circumstances of dwindling financial and other resources in the face of developments needs are heavy.

The ever-continuing growth in Nigeria's population (now estimated to be 150 million as at 2010 going by 2007 population figure and growth rate), the attendant escalating demand for education at all levels, the difficulty of re-sourcing education through the traditional means of face-to-face classroom bound mode, and the compelling need to provide education for all (EFA) irrespective of environmental, social or cultural circumstances have meant that the country must of necessity find the appropriate and cost effective means to respond adequately to the huge unmet demand for education.

Every nation invests in education because it can produce unquantifiable benefits for individuals, organisations and the society as a whole. Education is provided through formal and informal means. In formal settings the conventional (face-to-face school instruction) and distance education (offered with separation in terms of physical location of instructors and students) have been used to provide educational opportunities to recipients.

However, the growing demand for education in Nigeria and inadequacy of the conventional education to meet the demand has resulted into the distance education as alternative avenues. Aderinoye (2004) reported that 24% of the applicants from eight selected states were offered admission in 1998/99 session and 10.1% admitted in 2000/01 session citing JAMB cite as the source. He argued that the situation could be to lack of space or shortage of adequate manpower and high cost of keeping the students in schools. All these emerging situations have signal to the need for a comprehensive search for a more viable, robust, reliable, efficient, effective, and cost-beneficial educational solutions, which according to Jegede (2003), Sadeq (2003) and Aderinoye (2004), the most logical pathway to achieve these is by embracing distance education method to cater for those denied admission.

Open and distance education though not new in Nigeria has been given much prominence of recent. Many Nigerians benefited through the open education (correspondence) of Rapid Result College, and Exam Success Correspondence College, among others. In fact, like the Universal Basic Education (UBE), distance education is one of the major pivots, on which the present Federal administration in Nigeria hopes to improve the quantity and quality of instruction in Nigerian schools. It is also a means of providing access to basic and tertiary education for Nigerians. Policy statements and actions have given fillip to the determination of the government to make a success of the programme (Yusuf, 2006).

Ambe-Uva, (2007) stated that the 1977 National Policy on Education (NPE) for instance was unambiguous in its emphasis that 'maximum efforts will be made to enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given access to it. Such access may be through universities, or correspondence courses, or open universities, or part-time and work study programmes' (NPE, 1977). The policy equally states that "the Federal Government shall undertake to make life-long education the basis for the nation's educational policy' (Ibid,: 8).

In order to achieve the objective stated in the NPE, the Government adopted a philosophy of education for Nigeria meant to ensure that 'at any stage of the educational process after primary education, an individual will be able to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with study, or embarking on full-time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on' (Ibid,: 9). The report equally in recognising the importance of self-learning underlined the fact that, 'the education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning' (Ibid,: 8).

As earlier stated, Distance Education has come to stay in Nigeria as an alternative route to equal access to educational opportunities especially at higher institution level. This is because thousands of those denied in the conventional education were adequately offered admission through the distance learning. Despite this opportunity however, some students are still left out because there were limited vacancies and inadequacies of programmes to be offered. Also, some still feel reluctant because of the impressions they create or hear of the distance learning education.

Apart from the shortcoming earlier stated, various literatures consulted and interaction with University teachers revealed different attitude that stems from misconceptions about curriculum in Open Distance Learning (ODL); use of modern technology, mode of teaching and learning in ODL; student support services, time and duration of programme; interaction between the teachers and students, feedback problems; and recognition and acceptance of degrees award.

Ambe-Uva (2007) concludes that various statistics indicate that majority of Nigerians are yet to be reached (the class of the poor, illiterate, women, marginalised and those living in remote areas) through one form of education or the other. When we therefore consider her population of more than 140 million (N.P.C 2006), her poverty rate of 67.8 per cent and her 70 per cent rural population (Jegede 2003), what we visualise and the conclusion drawn is the tremendous need to meet the demands for education at all cost. The demand is however checkmated by the attitude and misconceptions by conventional teachers that handle ODL programmes.

On the basis of the above submission, this study is therefore design to help identify various misconceptions on ODL as alternative to conventional educational system, critically analysis the misconceptions about ODL when compared with conventional educational system and thus inform the misinformed conventional teachers on the variability of opportunities abound in ODL as better opportunity to provide quality education to thousands of those denied admission into our higher institution of higher learning in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

    A. Find-out the common misconceptions that conventional university teachers have about open and distance learning
    B. Ascertain which of the misconceptions has the highest frequency value
    C. Find-out the reasons responsible for such misconceptions
    D. Determine the common manifestations exhibited by university teachers to teaching and learning process in open and distance learning as a result of the misconceptions
    E. Suggest possible ways through which university teachers can be made to have a positive mindset towards open and distance learning and accept it as a standard as well as alternative component of the educational system.

Research Questions

For the purpose of statistical analysis, the objectives were turned to research questions; which were:

    1. What are the common misconceptions that university teachers have about open and distance learning?
    2. Which of these misconceptions has the highest frequency value?
    3. What are the reasons responsible for these misconceptions?
    4. What are the common manifestations exhibited by university teachers to teaching and learning process in open and distance learning as a result of the misconceptions?
    5. What are the possible ways through which university teachers can be made to have a positive mindset towards open and distance learning?

Conceptual Clarifications

Definition of Open Distance Learning

Open Distance Education (ODL) has been seen and described in different ways by scholars. While some call it Open Distance Learning, some say it is Open Distance Education (ODE). In whatever direction they perceive it, their definition and description are directed towards the separation of teachers from the students unlike what is operated in formal education system worldwide. We shall therefore examine few of the definitions as found in the literature. Alaezi (2005) defined open learning as educational patterns, approaches and strategies that permit people to learn with no barriers in respect of time, space, sex, age, and previous educational background – no entry qualification, no age limit, no biases against any gender, race, tribe, state of origin, quota system etc. Open learning is a new stage along the path of socio – educational revolution.

Ojo, Ogidan and Olakulehin (2006) defined open learning as an organized educational activity based on the use of teaching materials, in which the constraints on study are minimized in terms of access, entry, or time and

place, pace, method of study, or any combination of these. However, distance education on its own stresses the physical distance that does not allow direct interaction between the teachers, and the learners. Distance education may promote openness but it is not open learning. The combination of open learning and distance education give rise to the term known as Open and distance learning. UNESCO (2002) defined open and distance learning as an approach that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and/or group of learners. Koul (2005) defined open and distance learning as no more a mere education system in which the teachers and the learners are separated by distance, it is best described as a flexible multi-media delivery system which is highly sensitive to social realities. However, the concept of open and distance learning suggest an educational approach designed specially to reach learners in their homes/offices/shops and other locations where they might be, provide learning resources for them to qualify without formal class attendance in person, or create the benefits for lifelong education, no matter where or when they want to study.

According to Dhanarajan (2001), "distance education is the means by which the teacher is taken literally to the student. It is a teaching and a learning process in which students are separated from the teachers by a physical distance which is often bridged by communications technologies." Perraton (2001) sees distance education as "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by 'someone' removed in space and time from the learner. The link between that 'someone' and the learner is therefore necessarily provided by different means of communication and instruction".

Historical Development of Distance Education in Nigeria

The history of distance education in Nigeria dates back to the correspondence education as a means of preparing candidates for General Certificate in Education, a prerequisites for the London Matriculation Examination as far back as 1887, enrolled as external students studying through correspondence, and without enjoying any formal ties with the educational institution. Many Nigerians were quick at utilising opportunity available through ODL to obtain first degree and professional certificates (Aderinoye and Ojokheta, 2003). Omolewa (1982) has similarly mentioned that in 1925 several Nigerians, among them Eyo-Ita and H.O. Davies, passed the London Matriculation Examination. Later, E.O. Ajayi and Alvan Ikoku both obtained University of London degrees in philosophy in 1927 and 1929 respectively, and J. S. Ogunlesi obtained a degree in philosophy in 1933. Late Obafemi Awolowo and Late Nnamdi Azikwe were among nationalists that enjoyed the opportunity created in distance learning to have certificate in their chosen field. Thus, access to educational opportunities at a distance contributed immensely to these individuals productivity, which found resonance in the innovations they subsequently demonstrated in their various field of endeavour as teachers and politicians.

The first indigenous distance learning programme was the English by Radio programme of Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation that followed independence in 1960. The programme was primarily targeted at primary and secondary school levels and covered core courses at both levels with more emphasis placed on the teaching and learning of Science, Mathematics and English.
In spite of the establishment of the University College Ibadan in 1948, many of the pioneer academic staff of the University pursued their higher degrees through distance learning mode, thus combining work with higher degree programmes. The competition for admission into the University College established in 1948 at Ibadan (the only university in pre-independent Nigeria) forced many to seek for admission as students of correspondence colleges in Universities and Institutions in the United Kingdom.

The technology driven distance learning came into existence almost the same time with the first indigenous distance learning with the emergent of Educational Television programmes of the then National Television of Nigeria (NTV). There was also Schools Educational Broadcast of the Radio Nigeria stationed in Lagos and relayed all through the federation. All radio stations were required to hook at specific times of the day during school hours for broadcasting of programmes.

In the last four decades, University education programmes in the country begin to witness a lot of changes in terms of instructional delivery mode in some of our tertiary institutions. The Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) of University of Lagos that started in 1974, which later changed to Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSI) and now known as Distance Learning Institute was the first attempt made to establish a distance education unit as part of a University in Nigeria. It began initially to offer programmes in science education at first

degree level in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) for degree holders that did not possess teaching qualifications.

The National Teachers' Institute (NTI) started as a distance education institution in 1976 (as the first dedicated distance education institution) with the support of UNESCO. It began by training Grade Two Teachers (TC II). In 1990, the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) programme was introduced into NTI programmes when the expectation that the minimum teaching certificate in Nigeria was expected to be NCE. The Institute also introduced the PGDE programme in the year 2005. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) also started its distance education through a training programme known as Teachers-in- Service Education Programme (TISEP) for Grades Three and Two teachers and later the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). Also in November, 1972, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) established a University of the Air Programme for teachers in secondary schools and teacher training colleges.

The External Study Programme (ESP), that later became the Centre for External Studies (CES) now called the Centre for Distance Learning (DLC), was established by the University of Ibadan Department of Adult Education in 1988 to provide opportunities for teachers working in the field of education to improve their skills and knowledge through on-the-job training. This in-service training enabled them to subsequently raise their status from holders of Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) to full-fledged university degree holders. Though, University of Ibadan distance education only provided for teachers, this has changed as almost all the faculties in the University now participate and provide admission to interested students through the distance mode.

To offer similar programmes, the University Abuja established its Centre for Continuing Education in 1992. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), was established in July, 1983, by an Act of the National Assembly as the first distance learning tertiary institution in Nigeria when it became crystal clear to the then Federal Government that the ever growing demand for education by her people cannot be met by the traditional means of face-to-face classroom instructional delivery. NOUN was closed for almost 16 years but was re-opened. There are other professional bodies and government institutions that offer courses such as law, business administration, journalism and accounting in distance learning mode.

Management and Organisation of ODL in Nigeria

The management and organization of open and distance learning institutions all over the world are different from the conventional face-to-face institutions. To organise ODL, Ajadi (2009) said there is the need to combine intellectual efforts with physical abilities in the planning, implementing, course materials development, course materials presentation, facilitation period/contact hour, instructional delivery methodology, hierarchy of authority relationship, method of assessment and learners support services. Ajadi (2009) further said that the organization of open and distance learning at the university level may be either on a single or dual mode. In Nigeria, there are three (3) universities (University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and University of Abuja) recognized by National University Commission, NUC (2007) that operated dual mode of study and only one dedicated single mode university (National Open University of Nigeria) is also recognized by National University Commission (NUC) as at the same time.

Ajadi (2009) quoting Croft (1992) noted that there is a distinction between the mission of conventional face-to-face universities and dedicated distance education universities. The conventional face-to-face universities find its strengths in tradition, teaching, research and scholarship while dedicated distance education universities find its strengths in their contribution to accessibility and equality. This is in variance with the conventional face-to-face university. Distance education as an alternative to conventional face-to-face education may face heavy resistance/challenge from those who saw it as second best option and those who saw education par excellence as classroom teaching.

In Nigeria, the dedicated distance university has Study Centres which oversee, coordinate and manage the activities of the university at the state levels. Learners are constantly in contact with Study Centres rather than the headquarters. Study Centres are responsible for range of services to the learners that tend to bring the headquarters closer to the learners at the State and Local Government levels. The Study Centres are responsible for distribution of course materials to the learners, facilitation, and distribution of continuous assessment, counseling and examinations.

Comparative Analysis of Distance Education and Conventional Education Programmes

There is a high demand for higher education as majority of the school certificate holders that are qualified for admission to higher institutions of their choice could not do so because of keen competition to do so at the approved conventional schools available. Olayinka (2006) reports that no less than 1million candidates apply for university admissions every year of which more than a hundred Federal, State and Private Universities of which less than 20% are offered places, leaving the alternative of Open Distance Learning option for those students who could not gain admission to the conventional institutions.

Currently, the number of students that benefit from distance education is statistically very low as compared with those that attend conventional face-to-face university courses. Only two Universities (Abuja and Lagos) of the federally owned Universities offer dedicated distance education courses at degree and sub-professional levels. Others like ABU and Ibadan provide extension and sub-professional courses in education, agriculture and health to meet local demands. ABU also makes extensive use of radio and television to reach farmers while recently, Ibadan having established Diamond FM in 2009 has introduced using radio to reach her students. All Universities provide in-service education in one form or the other.

However, admission of students into the conventional universities is strictly by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) a statutory body that regulates Universities, Polytechnic and Colleges of Education admission. Having sat for JAMB and passed with minimum points, the students are still expected to score at least 200 marks of the 400 marks obtainable, prospective candidates would still pass through the process of Post JAMB test in their school of choice. This is aside the attainment of 5 O'Level credits in the course the students wish to study at the University of their Choice. DE students do not necessary pass through this baptism as there is no instituted authority like NUC or JAMB that moderate admission of students as experienced in the conventional institutions.

Also, while the tenure of studentship in the conventional education is four years IJMB students, direct entry students spend only three years (those students that have obtained either National Certificate in Education or Ordinary National Diploma certificate before) either four or five years are expected of students in DE. Regular students have abundant opportunities at their disposal as the fees paid are much less to those offering their programmes through part time (distance). Attending lectures/examinations and allocation of classes in conventional school is less worrisome as in the distance education. The nature of the distance education does not allow much time for extracurricular activities that could boost cognitive and psychomotor capacity of the distance learners. All these are despite the fact that all students are expected to obtain the same certificate and operate in the same labour market.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type was adopted for the study

Population and Samples of the Study

The population comprised all the university lecturers at Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, and Lagos State University, Nigeria. The sample size comprised one hundred and thirteen (113) lecturers selected through the purposive sampling technique *while simple random sampling techniques was used to select fifteen (15) departments (*seven from faculties of Education, four from Social Sciences and four from Arts). For participants to qualify for selection, they must have been teaching at least for three years in the distance learning programme, and must have had minimal understanding of the philosophy and modus operandi of open and distance learning.

Instruments

Data were collected through *Common Misconception of Open and Distance Learning Questionnaire (CMODLQ)* with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages and content analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results obtained through the research questions are presented below:

Research Question One

Research question one sought to find-out the common misconceptions about open and distance learning among the respondents. They were asked to write-out their fears about open and distance learning and the following were identified and collated:

- A debased form of learning with so much emphasis on individualized rather than group learning
- True learning takes place with the physical presence of the tutor; any other learning form from this arrangement is inferior learning;
- True learning cannot be mediated by technology;
- Less vigorous since the content of learning cannot be adequately covered within short period of face-to-face contact;
- It is opportunistic form of learning for average or less intelligent students;
- In-depth knowledge acquisition is unachievable through ODL;
- ODL is not suited for practical learning;
- Progress of learning cannot be systematically determined or measured;
- Affective dimension of learning is often sacrificed;
- Evaluation of learning is less vigorous due to the consideration accorded the competing demands of learners and
- ODL is too isolational.

Research Question Two

Which of these misconceptions has the highest frequency value?

About the 90 per cent of the respondents conceptualised ODL as a less vigorous means of educational provision since the content of learning cannot be adequately covered within short period of face-to-face contact. They argued further that since enough contact is not made feedback on teaching and learning would be impossible. On the basis of this, the characteristics required of distance learners differ from those required of learners in conventional classrooms. The finding also showed that 87 per cent of the respondents perceived ODL as a debased form of learning with so much emphasis on individualized rather than group learning.

When compared to most face-to-face learning environments, distance learning requires students to be more focused and better time managers and to be able to work both independently and as group members (Hardy and Boaz 1997). 70 per cent claimed that evaluation of learning in ODL is less vigorous due to the consideration accorded the competing demands of learners. Some of the respondents (64 per cent) believed that learners in ODL are less intelligent and educational competent when compared with students in conventional university system. Also, about 56 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that evaluation of learning outcome in ODL is less vigorous due to the special consideration accorded learners because of the competing demand they face. Hence, it is believed that in-depth knowledge acquisition is not achievable through ODL.

Research Question Three

What are the reasons responsible for these misconceptions?

Some university teachers (53% of the sampled) believe that courses offered in distance education is not adequately prepared for as been experienced in the traditional classroom environment, while 47% are of the opinion that teaching appointment in ODL is not tailored with those experienced and skilled in distance education, rather, in most cases, lecturers in the conventional education who presume fit in are easily employed in distance learning, because of this, a lot of responsibility are placed on the students in ODL. This has also been established by Hillstock (2005). Such responsibility includes idea of self-directed learning.

Students in DE find it difficult to make inquiries, advisory services, information management, library services, record keeping etc. This makes affective dimension of learning to be sacrificed. This implies that ODL

programme is less vigorous since the content of learning cannot be adequately covered within short period of face-to-face contact. Reviewing the study of Alford and Engelland (2001) courses in ODL require a great deal of development and preparation on the part of the lecturers but some lecturers are mostly engrossed in the 'sage on stage' approach used in more traditional education, instead of 'guide on the side" that is most relevant in the DE. To this end, some people have misconceptions about the quality of the products of the DE.

Most students because of the time factor and the nature of their occupation could not access the opportunity available to them. Observation revealed that interaction with students in some universities that provide DE showed failure in adequate academic and administrative support services while course materials that in most cases needed to be specially made to suit the DE are not provided. The quality of the physical infrastructure does not provide support to distance learners. The classrooms in some schools where DE programme are located are badly ventilated and are in a noisy location while the absence of audio-visual facilities all indicate limited academic support to these learners. As a result of the aforementioned problems, some university teachers find it difficult to see a learner having in-depth knowledge acquisition through ODL. This finding agrees with Kilian (1997) submission that DE when compared with conventional is more costly in terms of time, energy.

Some teachers have misconceptions about the use of instructional designers and instructional technologists responsible for assisting lecturers by reviewing course content and applying the appropriate tools and technology to enhance the learning experience. This is unlike developed countries where these professionals are found to be available and relevant to the success of ODL, Nigeria is not making much effort to develop and make use of these professionals as consultants, web developers, technical writers, and/or researchers. The belief and notion of conventional teachers is that the absence of these innovative makes ODL a mirage as learning cannot be mediated by technology in fact only 32% of the sample respondents have personal laptop to conduct researches.

On the effective use of appropriate technology the common misconception is that distance education equals the use of a particular type of technology, namely the Internet. Unlike developing countries like Nigeria, where there is sufficient electricity that boosts learning activities, this leads many to believing that by making materials available to students online, the job is done. However, in Nigeria, insufficient power supply and inadequate computer literacy inhibit both the teachers and students to access the opportunity available in computer technology.

Research Question Four

What are the common manifestations exhibited by university teachers to teaching and learning process in open and distance learning as a result of the misconceptions?

As a response to the misconceptions about ODL, university teachers perceive the products of the programme are been inferior to their conventional counterparts in terms of quality. At the University of Ibadan, for example, not until recently that other faculty apart from the faculty of education allowing their departments to take part in the activity of the Distance Learning Centre. With their embracement, the University has provided access to thousands of applicants wishing to have university education. Unfortunately, some of these teachers take teaching appointment in ODL programme as opportunity to eat from the national cake without given the required zeal to work as they do in the conventional educational system.

Research Question Five

What are the possible ways through which university teachers can be made to have a positive mind-set towards open and distance learning?

It is urgently necessary to incorporate distance learning as a compulsory course in our education courses in the university. For this, every intending teacher in all our educational system would see the relevance and need for distance education as alternative route to accessibility of education in Nigeria. Also, regular capacity building for the existing university teachers is important as this will equip them of the peculiar nature of ODL as different to conventional university education.

Only certified teachers that are experienced in ODL theories and practices should be made to handle teaching of students because of the special peculiarities of the ODL.

CONCLUSION

The distance education system has emerged as an alternative as well as complementary channel of education and training in Nigeria. DE is being recognised quantitatively and needs to move towards qualitative standard so as to meet up with the challenges posed by people who believe that "nothing good comes out of Israel". The misconceptions people have on DE vary, however, they opened ways for a change of attitude by the government that need to provide enabling law to guide activities of the institutions and other stakeholders that provide DE services in the country. The students/learners of DE should be able to compete favourably well with those in conventional programmes. This is necessary because with the growth in population in the country, the process of convergence between distance education and conventional education is becoming faster and this will increase in the nearest future.

To this end, there is the need to combine intellectual efforts with physical abilities in the planning, implementing, course materials development, course materials presentation, facilitation period/contact hour, instructional delivery methodology, hierarchy of authority relationship, method of assessment and learners support services. Distance Education needs equal attention as that of Conventional Universities; hence, the need to have a statutory body apart from the NUC to monitor and streamline activities of all institutions providing DE programmes in the country. This will go a long way to sanitise the quality of personnel involved and the products of the ODL for the competitive labour market as the students in the conventional institutions.

The conventional institutions that also provide DE should endeavour to have the same course content for their students irrespective of the nature of the programmes they offered. This will further improve the standard of students produced in the DE. There is urgent need to revisit the issue of Student Support Service (SSS) in DE programmes. Both the administrative and academic staff involved in DE should be inducted in the peculiar nature of DE as different from conventional education, and should be ready to offer themselves to serve the interest of the students. There is immediate need for policy makers to formulate necessary policies and strategies that will enhance quality of distance education in Nigeria so that the country will play active role in the globalised knowledge economy of the 21st century.

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