

# **Open and Distance Learning Practices in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning**

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**Being an Invited Keynote Address at the 3<sup>rd</sup> University of Ibadan Annual  
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## 0.0 Preamble

Let me begin this conversation by giving gratitude to the Vice Chancellor of this University and the Director of the Distance Learning Centre for extending an invitation to me to deliver the Third in your series of annual Distinguished ODL Lecture Series and Stakeholders Forum. I am most humbled to be invited to this great institution; the premier and arguably the most prestigious university in Africa, that has produced academic giants too numerous to be counted or mentioned here.

The University of Ibadan continues to keep to its reputation of a trail blazer in many areas. Let me single out three of these areas not for any reasons that could be adduced to a partial judgement but because they relate to the areas I am most familiar with academically and professionally.

First, when I was at the Association of African Universities (AAU) as the Secretary-General, I had the singular fortune of facilitating the launch of the Pan African University (PAU). I recall with fond memories the tremendous respect that University of Ibadan attracted from others around the continent and at the African Union Commission each time I had to mention it as one of our five Centres of Excellence to be used as regional nodes in the establishment of the Pan African University. I carry a great sense of fulfilment with me coming here after the successful launch of the PAU and now seeing that UI is playing its gigantic role as one of the pillars of the continental University.

Second, from information I have gathered, the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre appears to be the best of all the DLCs or DLIs in Nigeria. I am very proud that your DLC is a giant among equals and is helping to propagate the tenets of ODL. Indeed I am told that the University of Ibadan through its Distance Learning Centre, is at the forefront of ODL delivery in Nigeria as recently adjudged by the National University Commission (NUC). What has further attracted me to accept this invitation is that the DLC organises this event as a two-in-one event; the sole aim being to popularise ODL and ensure a wider participation by its stakeholders. I congratulate you and commend your effort in this regard.

The third reason is that non face-to-face instruction in higher institutions in Nigeria began here at UI. History has it that the United Kingdom Oxford University extra mural studies commenced at the University College, Ibadan in 1947 to enable a good number of Nigerians thirsty for higher education, but unable to get a place in the limited admissions into the University College, Ibadan, to do so through correspondence study.

## 1.0 Introduction

It is an established fact, globally, that education plays a significant and important role in national development. All countries of the world seemed to have accepted the tremendously compelling arguments to make education the cornerstone of national development. The arguments include (i) the vital role education plays in economic and technological development, (ii) education of the citizenry to remove illiteracy and poverty, and (iii) developing a culturally and socially tolerant people who exercise ethical and moral considerations in national and local affairs, with a community spirit. The justification for the use of education as a veritable tool to catalyse socio-economic development does not require any long argument or star gazing. The logic is quite simple: no development can meaningfully take place in any country unless you build the assets in human resources. Indeed, it was the Late Nelson Mandela, an anti-apartheid revolutionary, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and former President of the Republic of South Africa, who alluded to this when he said that:

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated.”*

Unfortunately, its implementation has become a nightmare for many developing, especially the Sub-Saharan, countries where hap-hazard policy formulation and execution, coupled with either the absence or the lack of enforcement of ineffectual, laws and regulatory activities to guide educational development.

In a number of African countries, with Nigeria being a sterling example, whereas the cascading effects of all the levels of education are known to establish a composite whole in the implementation strategies of education for national development, each level is often taken in isolation of others. Furthermore, the apex of the system, being tertiary education, is often treated with planning that is not consistent with or designed for long-term success. In a number of cases, many institutions operate illegally and indeed many have been known to produce several cohorts of graduands without any law or operate with obsolete laws that are only fit to be consigned to the archives at best or oblivion in its actual sense.

A cardinal goal of the government’s commitment to transform Nigeria using education as a socio-economic development tool of the massification of quality education was through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976. The UPE provided for every Nigerian child from age 6 to enrol and

remain in the primary school for six years under a free education scheme funded by the federal and state governments.

## 2.0 Policy Framework

A policy framework for a nation puts in perspective what education should do for the country as an instrument of development. However, no policy can be formulated unless the country identifies its philosophy and national goals as a guide to policy formulation. Issues such as what does the country want its citizens to be? Where should the country be in ten or fifteen years' time in terms of development of its people, resources and infrastructure? What are the guiding principles for social interaction, freedom and justice for its various peoples and communities? How does the country want to relate to other countries within the global sphere? Two over-arching guiding philosophy for Nigeria are attendant to these questions. They are to:

- (a) live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality and justice; and
- (b) promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding.

Furthermore, the five main national goals of Nigeria, derived from the national philosophy which have formed the foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of:

- (a) a free and, democratic society;
- (b) a just egalitarian society;
- (c) a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) a great and dynamic economy; and
- (e) a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

In formulating the National Policy on Education in 1977, the Federal Government of Nigeria expressed awareness of the fact that *“education is the most important instrument of change in any society”*. And that *“any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution”*.

To bring about meaningful changes in the Nigerian society through educational revolution, Government then adopted, among other things, *“policies which were to be directed towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels”*. And affirmed that *“the Federal Government shall undertake to make life-long education the basis for the nation’s education policy and that 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 studies, or embarking on full-time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on... the education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning”*.

### **3.0 The Genesis of the National Policy on Education**

In summary, what is now known as the National Policy on Education was the outcome of the 1969 National Curriculum Conference which was attended by a cross-section of Nigerians. The conference was an expression of the general dissatisfaction with the then existing education system which was labelled as ‘irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals’.

After the National Curriculum Conference, further deliberation took place on what a national policy on education for an independent and sovereign Nigeria should be. The final tangible outcome of the seminar was a document published in 1977 which was a revised draft document using comments and observations from the various states, interest groups and stakeholders.

Before we proceed further, two observations need to be made here and which bears tremendous significance in relation to the authenticity and relevance of the content of the document and the way and manner the Policy was implemented.

First, it took the nation about 8 years to evolve a national policy on education; enough time for most issues treated in the document to have become out-dated by the time it was published, even though some of them still remain relevant to date!

Second, the UPE, a very important segment of our education was in fact started even before we had the National Policy on Education. Your guess is as good as mine regarding how relevant the policy was for the UPE and if its implementation was synchronised with any policy!

It is note-worthy that since the publication of the first edition in 1997, at least three other editions have been published notably in 1981, 1998 and 2004 respectively in order to keep pace with developments in several sectors of education and the national economy reflecting innovations and emergence of globalisation. Some of these changes and innovations included the following:

- (a) The lifting of the suspension order on Open and Distance Learning Programme by Government;
- (b) The revitalisation and expansion of the National Mathematical Centre (NMC);
- (c) The establishment of Teachers Registration Council (TRC);
- (d) The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the school curriculum;
- (e) The prescription of French Language in the primary and secondary schools' curriculum as second official language;
- (f) The prescription of minimum number of subject to taken by SSCE candidates;
- (g) The integration of basic education in the programme of Quaranic schools, to ensure equal opportunity and effective implementation of UBE;
- (h) The repositioning of science, technical and vocational education in the scheme of national educational for optimum performance; and
- (i) A general contextual change to reflect the state of professional practice in education.

#### **4.0 Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as Part of Education for Development in the NPE**

Quite interestingly, right from the onset of the NPE in 1977, Open and Distance Learning had been identified as an integral part of education to be used for socio-economic development of the nation. It recognised ODL as a distinct sector of education to be organised nation-wide and given individual flexibility in the development of the human resources towards national development. For instance, the 1977 edition of the NPE stated unambiguously and emphatically 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 programme”*. The Policy stipulated a system which encompasses education for all, education for life, life-long learning, life-wide education, adult education, mass education, media-based education, self-learning, personalised learning, part-time studies, and much more. From my own perspective, it is all these variants now known as open and distance learning that the Policy

anticipated, without any limitation or exclusion, as long as the variant contributes to *“equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels”*.

What the NPE seemed to be saying, since 1977, was that any attempt at total national development through education could only become successful if it is effectively linked to capacity building through ODL. This is significant not only for the nation, but also for the practitioners, ODL students and others interested in a balanced, comprehensive national development which takes all segments of the nation into consideration. It is simply saying that no one should be left behind in the quest to develop the nation through capacity building of its human resources!

My observation about this is that right from 1977, the NPE had wanted ODL to be mainstreamed and not treated as a poor cousin of face-to-face formal full-time classroom-bound education.

The recognition of national goals and the vehicle to be used in reaching those goals are one thing, identifying, harnessing and effectively executing them to achieve the desired effect is another. We now know that apart from the many flaws which have been identified in the National Policy on Education, the implementation has not been feasible as a result of several factors. These include the difficulty of meeting all the educational needs of a country with a large population of about 180 million people through the limited resources of government, the ever-changing terrain of education as guided by the local and global forces, the growing realisation that conventional formal schooling cannot meet the phenomenal appetite of Nigerians for Western type of education and acquisition of certificates, and the problems with finding all the necessary human and infrastructural facilities to educate people on a massive scale.

Let us only focus on one of the factors mentioned above to see how difficult the implementation of the NPE as conceived by Nigeria had been. Education is going through a period of unprecedented turbulence. Institutions of higher learning are increasingly being called to justify their existence, be more responsive to their students and the larger society, continually cut cost in the face of dwindling financial allocation from proprietors, and transmit relevant knowledge to students in a world characterised by a movement towards global economy. These contemporary changes in education and the delivery of instruction is significantly affecting and being affected by a paradigm shift with regard to how information and knowledge is transmitted, distributed, accessed, and processed. This shift has been propelled by several developments, which are integrating, to impact on how teaching and learning occur. Some of these developments are:

- The shift in the concept of education from an elite-based system to mass higher education with open access and a view to developing a knowledge/learning society.
- The exponential growth in knowledge with which the world is finding difficulty keeping pace. We are told that the half-life of the knowledge we currently hold is limited to less than five years (Marshall, 1996). This means that in five years' time all the knowledge we currently hold in our long-term memory and guard so jealously will become irrelevant, redundant or outdated forcing us to continually 'go back to school' again.
- The emerging postmodernist view of knowledge generation which is responsible for a move from looking at knowledge generation as hierarchical and restrictive to being regarded as non-linear, socially negotiated and should be accessible to anyone and everyone through a variety of ways.
- The need to look at the various ways in which knowledge, its generation and transmission can be effectively managed to aid in personal and societal development and global economy.

Fleming (1996) argues that a collection of data is not information and a collection of pieces of information is not knowledge unless they have some patterns and relations, are understood and contextual.

Learning takes place when we connect new information to patterns we already hold in our long-term memory. This becomes knowledge. Knowledge therefore becomes ideas and understandings, which can be used to take some actions in order to achieve some goals. Knowledge is stored in many ways and places. For example, it may be stored in a person's brain, stored in an organisation, or held in a repository such as a library, or organised in a database. Human beings engage in finding, selecting, distilling, organising, and presenting information in a way that, within contexts, can be used for several things once patterns and association can be discerned from them. Given the rate at which knowledge is generated today, individuals, organisations, and educational institutions need to transmit, manage, and process information and knowledge on a large scale to diverse groups of people in different locations efficiently and effectively.

This is where the use of open and distance learning becomes almost unavoidable in this age.

What is open and distance Learning and how did it begin?

Why is ODL so germane to national development and what can it do for a nation beyond (the limitation of) what full-time studies can do?

## **5.0 What is Open and Distance Learning?**

What transformed into “Distance Education” in the 70s and 80s and is now called “Open, Distance and e-Learning” started as “Correspondence Study”, then “Correspondence Education” in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. At different times of its history, Distance Education was also known as, “Home Study”, “Off Campus Study”, “Independent Study”, “Distance Study”, “Telematic Study”. It was at one time or the other also christened as “Distributed Learning”, “Online Learning”, “Self-paced Learning”, “Blended Learning”, “Technology-enabled Learning”, “Virtual Learning”. There are many more. I cannot recall what type of learning and instruction would have as many names transformed or transmuted from one to another within such a short time of its history and emergence. These transition or transformation in name was a reflection of the continual and continuous dynamic foment within the field. Each name or label depicted an incremental rise in the acceptance of, and interest in, the field; the tremendous amount of work being done; and the continual modernisation of the tenets of the field of education. Given the rate at which Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has influenced and intertwined with distance learning, I dare predict that we have not heard or had the last yet. Several more rebranding of the field will emerge in not too distant future.

However, we need not be overly concerned with the name while neglecting the substance and content it represents. The interesting thing is that in spite of the various transformations in names and nomenclature, ODL continues to retain, without serious changes or differences in its essential meaning, what it means to practitioners, stakeholders and students alike.

Open and distance learning, essentially means a form of instruction by a mode other than the face-to-face method, where there is physical separation between the teacher and the learner, and

instruction takes place through a variety of media including print and modern ICT. This has always been the working definition of this type of learning and instruction through the ages beginning from the 18<sup>th</sup> century when this field of studies and knowledge began.

Open and distance learning is a cost-effective instruction that is independent of time, location, pace and space. It can be used for a variety of learning situations, including primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education and thrives on economies of scale. It focuses very much on quality assurance, well designed instructional packages, and thrives on exceedingly well structured and resourced student support. The aspect of open learning in the ODL pertains to the flexibility of and access to instruction in order to ensure broad availability of educational opportunities to all. Openness and access disregard age, previous level of academic achievement, and other factors which creating artificial barriers to education as a life-long pursuit.

I have spent a considerable portion of the foregoing section to define open and distance learning to set straight what seems to be a continuing or persistent misconception of what ODL means, and how it is being misused, in our local context. A recent draft report by Ogunbusola, et al (2016) lends credence to ODL 'being used to mean various things in the Nigerian parlance. This is more so that any practice where people have to gather periodically for the purpose of acquiring higher education is regarded as distance learning.' (p.4).

## **6.0 How Did Open and Distance Learning Begin?**

The history of open and distance learning is as detailed as the field itself and can engage volumes of documentation. Suffice it to say here that we will only summarise the aspects of the history with relevance to Tertiary education as it concerns this Round Table Conference.

Open and distance learning as a form of human resource development has come a long way. It has transcended various chronological landmarks and transformation in nomenclature. The earliest record of distance teaching was the effort by Anna Tickner and Caleb Phillips to teach the new method of Short Hand through correspondence. In 1728, the Boston Gazette newspaper had an

advert from Caleb Philipps seeking for students wishing to learn Short Hand through weekly mailed lessons. In 1833 the study of composition was offered by post in Sweden.

Open and distance learning has developed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century through several important stages as

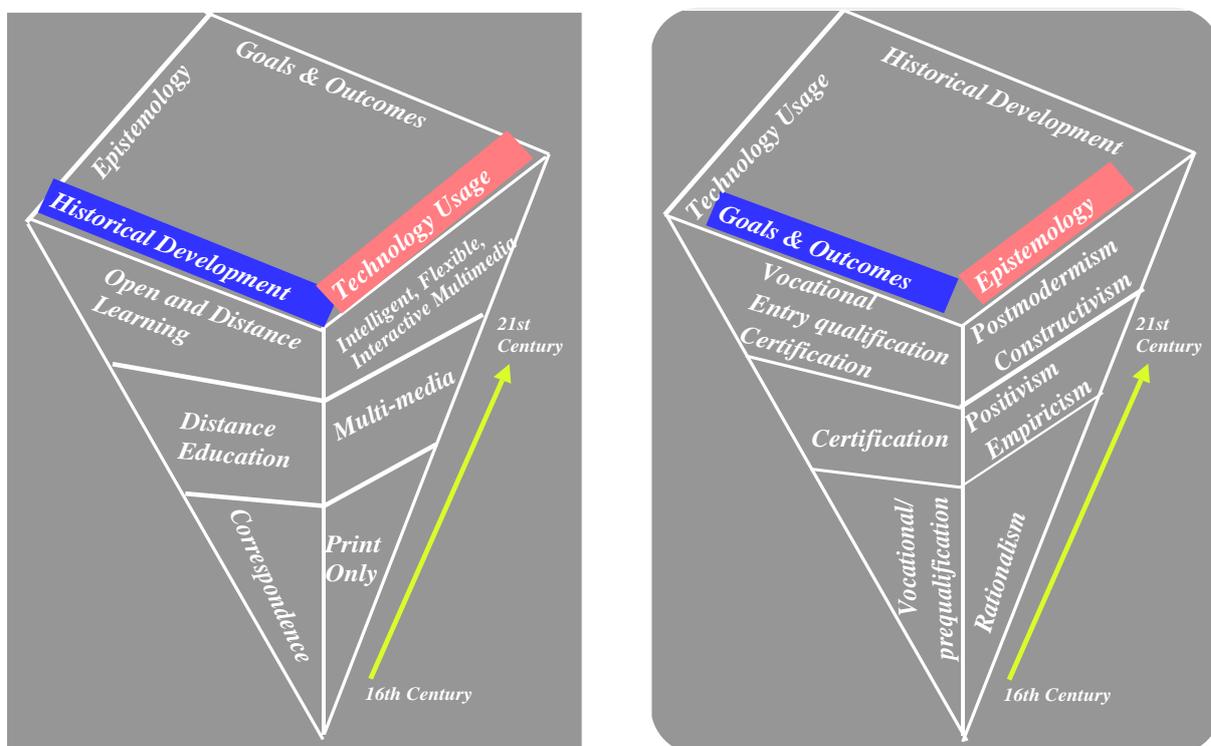


Figure 1: A cuboidal-pyramidal illustration of the development of open and distance education- ©Jegade 1999

shown in the cuboidal-pyramidal illustration. Four major signposts – historical development, goals & outcomes, epistemology, and technology usage have been used to sketch the development over time. The full description and discussion of the illustration is beyond the scope of, and time for, this paper.

The literature has it that the first distance education course in the modern sense was pioneered by Sir Isaac Pitman in the 1843, to teach a system of shorthand by mailing texts transcribed into shorthand on postcards and he also received transcriptions from his students in return for correction (see Battenberg, 1971; Holmberg, 1989). It is on record that Pitman was the first to introduce the innovation of student feedback on assignments, tests and examinations. This was the first record of

using the postal system in England for correspondence study. This early beginning led to the establishment of the Phonographic Correspondence Society in 1843 which formalised correspondence studies, and later led to the establishment of Sir Isaac Pitman Colleges across England. The first correspondence school in the United States, called the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, was founded in 1873.

With regard to Tertiary education distance programmes, the University of London was recorded as the first university in the world to offer distance learning degrees with its External degree programme established in 1828 and was chartered in 1858. Charles Dickens, the popular English Playwright and Novelist, labelled the University of London as "People's University" because it provided access to higher education to students from less affluent backgrounds.

In the United States of America, the first President of the University of Chicago, Professor William Rainer Harper started distance learning degree programmes in 1882. This concept of using correspondence school courses to promote education was copied by Columbia University. As far back as the 1906, the popularity of correspondence tertiary education grew so large that enrolment reached 900,000 at the International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pennsylvania. This tremendous success was attributed to sending out complete textbooks instead of single lessons, and the use of 1200 aggressive in-person salesmen, as the new form of pedagogy. Their claim was that 'regular technical school or college aims to educate a man broadly; our aim, on the contrary, is to educate him only along some particular line. The college demands that a student shall have certain educational qualifications to enter it, and that all students study for approximately the same length of time, and when they have finished their courses they are supposed to be qualified to enter any one of a number of branches in some particular profession. We, on the contrary, are aiming to make our courses fit the particular needs of the student who takes them'.

At the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, education was a high priority in the USA and their schools and colleges witnessed great expansion. Older or working adults interested in further education attended night schools such as the YMCA school in Boston which later transformed into the Northeastern University.

With all these disparate and isolated humble beginnings of correspondence study, little did they or anyone of their time realise the enormous revolution this method of teaching and learning will have on the world.

ODL at the tertiary level spread across the world and to Australia where they specially took advantage of ODL to conquer instruction across their large expanse of distances. As a result, the University of Queensland established its Department of Correspondence Studies in 1911. Africa was not left out. The University of South Africa, transformed from being an examining and certification body, into a distance education institution in 1946.

In 1938, a global association catering for distance education, called The International Conference for Correspondence Education (ICCE) held its first meeting. The ICCE later became the modern day International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) with headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden.

The emergence of dedicated universities for ODL called Open University started with the United Kingdom Open University founded by the then serving Labour Party government under Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Planning commenced in 1965 under the Minister of State for Education, Jennie Lee, who established a model for the OU as one of widening access to the highest standards of scholarship in higher education, and set up a planning committee consisting of university vice-chancellors, educationalists and television broadcasters, chaired by Sir Peter Venables. Sir Walter Perry was appointed the OU's first vice-chancellor in January 1969, admitted its first 25,000 students in 1971, and adopted a radical open admissions policy.

The Open University broadened the scope of the correspondence programme and helped to create a respectable learning alternative to the traditional form of education. It has been at the forefront of developing new technologies to improve the distance learning service as well as undertaking research in other disciplines.

The successful experiment of the UKOU began the establishment of other open universities around the world. For instance, Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, was created in 1970 and followed a similar, though independently developed, pattern. These were followed by the Spain's National University of Distance Education in 1972 and Germany's FernUniversität in Hagen in 1974.

There are now dozens of open universities around the world including the Indira Gandhi National Open University, Malaysian Open University, the National Open University of Nigeria and several others, both public and private.

It must again be observed that as far back as 1920 certain characteristics of ODL took firm grounds in tertiary education around the world. For instance, ODL offered flexible programmes, embraced open learning and provided free vocational programmes. They provided individualised instruction for learners, programme costs were very low so as to be affordable, and employed the pedagogy of what was labelled as 'testing, recording, classification, and differentiation'.

All "open universities" use distance education technologies as delivery methodologies though some require attendance at local study centres or at regional "summer schools". Some open universities have grown to become 'mega-universities', a term coined to denote institutions with more than 100,000 students.

Shortly after there was the emergence of open universities, open colleges and open polytechnics in different parts of the world. The establishment of open colleges started in 1976 when Bernard Luskin launched Coastline Community College as a college beyond walls, combining computer assisted instruction with telecourses, in the USA.

Open Polytechnics started with the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in 1990 but started in 1946 as the Technical Correspondence School and in 1963, became the Technical Correspondence Institute (TCI). The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand became the first specialist national provider of open and distance learning at tertiary level.

The literature has it that the history and evolution of distance education has been marked by three main issues. The first is **access**: to allow students who would otherwise be denied educational opportunities to gain access to courses. The second is **equivalence and integrity**: students taught at a distance should receive an equivalent education and an equivalent qualification with the same integrity as those earned through the conventional mode. The third is **excellence**: quest for excellence in quality of learning materials, teaching, support services, academic and administrative systems or professional development of staff. As the resolution of these issues continue to dominate the theory

and practice of distance and open learning, many countries in the world, especially those developing, including Nigeria, became increasingly attracted to this form of education.

## **7.0 Brief History of Open and Distance Education in Nigerian Higher Institutions**

Nigeria also had some unique experience with correspondence studies before and after independence. These included the following:

- The Oxford University of the United Kingdom's extra mural studies at the University College, Ibadan which commenced in 1947 to enable a good number of Nigerians thirsty for higher education, but who are unable to get a place in the limited admissions into the University College, Ibadan, to do so through correspondence study.
- Many Nigerians sought admission as students of Correspondence College in Universities and Institutions in the United Kingdom while others registered as external candidates for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) both Ordinary and Advanced Level of the University of London and Cambridge.
- The Rapid Results College and Wosley Hall correspondence studies may be cited as the first set of 'organised' Distance Learning Programmes in Africa. They are termed 'correspondence' because they had their studies mailed from England while the students equally mailed their answers overseas to be marked. They relied mainly on the postal system and there were no radio, tv, audio or video accompaniment.
- After gaining independence, the first organised distance learning programme was the English by Radio Programme of the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation that began immediately after independence in 1960. It was immediately followed by the Educational Television Programmes of the then National Television of Nigeria (NTV). The English by Radio programme was a National Broadcast for both primary and secondary schools relayed during school hours. The programme formed an integral part of school activity. As such, school

time-tables provided periods for students to listen and follow instructions with students' workbook.

The discussion of all the aspects of the history of open and distance learning in Nigeria is beyond the scope of this paper hence I am restricting the discussion to a summary of ODL at the tertiary level.

It is on record that open and distance learning mode was first employed at the tertiary level in Nigeria at Ahmadu Bello University when it began the University of the Air in 1972. The university subsequently used it for the Teachers In-Service Education programme (TISEP) in 1975. The University of Lagos also began distance learning in 1974 with the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) in response to the growing demand of working adults in line with the global trends. The Unit subsequently became the Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) which was later restructured into the present Distance Learning Institute (DLI). The University of Lagos was the first tertiary institution to operate the dual mode system.

In 1978, in response to the need to fill the massive vacuum of qualified and trained teachers to service the Universal Primary Education programme launched by the Gowon Military administration in 1977, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), located in Kaduna, was established and operates the single mode programme for upgrading the qualification of under-qualified teachers as well as the continuing education of teachers using distance learning techniques. The activities of NTI are supervised by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) which carries out periodic quality assurance and accreditation exercises of NTI's National Certificate in Education Distance Learning programmes in partnership with The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on capacity building.

As far back as 1976, Nigeria took a decision to make provision to massify access to higher education by setting up a planning committee to advise on the setting up of an open university. A Presidential Planning Committee on the Open University System for Nigeria, with Professor Afolabi Ojo as Chairman, (who later became the Vice Chancellor of the NOU) was setup and inaugurated on 1st May, 1980 by the then Honourable Minister of Education, Dr I C. Madubuike with far reaching terms of reference including "to draw up a plan of operation to enable the open university reach an enrolment target of 100,000 in five years (1985)". In spite of the total commitment of the Committee to its task, the Act setting up the university was not passed by the National Assembly until 20th April 1983. The

President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari assented to the bill on 22nd July, 1983.

The National Open University (NOU) thereafter went into full-scale activities of screening candidates for various courses in 1984. Unfortunately, Alhaji Shehu Shagari who could be described as the founding father of the National Open University at that time was kicked out of office in the December 31, 1983 via a coup de-tat by General M. Buhari. For some inexplicable reasons, the announcement suspending the NOU was made on April 25, 1984 during a budget speech. Logically, one would think that such an announcement had something to do with lack of funds by government. But it would have been questionable as Nigeria was, at that time, making a lot of harvest from the sales of its crude oil more than ever before. Whatever the reason, Nigeria had not only lost several years of the use and practice of ODL as a result of the suspension of NOU, the country still could not wish a way the mounting need of hundreds of thousands of its citizens seeking access to higher education. In effect, it meant that the unmet demand for higher education which began before independence was mounting tremendously instead of being solved!

Today, the flagship tertiary institution for Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria is The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) established formally in 2002. It is a landmark development in several respects: it was timely for the thousands of otherwise qualified Nigerians who needed a University education but were denied access to the existing conventional universities that could only admit less than 15 percent of applicants. NOUN offers a total of 101 undergraduate, sub-degree certificate, diploma and post graduate (PGD, Bachelor, Masters, Ph.D.) programmes in Arts and Social Sciences, Business and Human Resource Management, Education, Law, Science and Technology; and has two special Units: The Centre for Lifelong Learning and Workplace Training and The Regional Training & Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) jointly established by NOUN and the Commonwealth of Learning in 2003 to identify and meet the needs of ODL-related research and capacity building in the west African sub-region.

## **8.0 Justification and Critical Relevance of ODL to Nigeria**

There are long and short term benefits of embracing distance education in Nigeria. From the aforementioned, it is clear that there are obvious advantages to the government in using open and distance learning mode to complement the traditional methods of education in Nigeria. Amongst the

many advantages which the government and the good people of Nigeria stand to benefit can be grouped into the following areas:

- access and equity for comprehensive national development;
- alleviation of capacity constraints for economics, human resources and rural development;
- education for all especially to reduce or totally eliminate illiteracy and poverty;
- capacity building for human resource development especially in areas of acute deficiencies such as vocational and technical education, science and technology;
- life-long and life-wide education in order to build a learning and knowledge-based society;
- access to, and capitalising on, emerging market opportunities both within the African region and globally;
- avenue for transforming our higher education sector to make our institutions respond to contemporary changes, developments and needs of Nigeria;
- providing the answer to the perennial problems of teacher education;
- appreciating, educating the citizens about, and using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to accelerate national and community development and provide an organised entry into the global information superhighway;
- generating spin-off effects on other sectors of national development such as raising development in telecommunications, information technology industry, broadcasting, postal and informatics and the development of many education-related small-scale industries; and
- alleviating budgetary constraints as expenditure on open and distance education has been shown in other countries to be as low as 30 per cent of the total cost of the conventional form of education beyond the take-off costs.

In the words of the *Communiqué of the National Workshop on Distance Education in Nigeria* which was held in September 2000 at Abuja, the advantages of distance education in a nutshell is that it 'can enhance education as a form of human resource development, and satisfy the exceptionally large demand for education by our huge and rapidly expanding population which is still mainly rural, remote, under-represented, and marginalised through resources, location, economic and other reasons. Distance education will enable Nigeria to provide access for all and achieve equitable representation by 'taking the distance out of education.'

## **9.0 Three indices of indispensability of ODL for Nigeria**

All the above listed justification for ODL in Nigeria can be grouped, supported and argued from three major and significant areas which I call the three indices of indispensability. All these, as can be seen

from the brief discussion on each, combine to inform the dire need for a viable option to face-to-face classroom-bound higher education in Nigeria.

### **9.1 Demographic changes**

Africa, of which Nigeria is a significant part due to its population, is undergoing a series of profound shifts in a number of areas including its economy, political terrain and demography. Africa's ONE billion inhabitants – projected to grow to 2.3 billion (mostly youth) by 2050, is the world's largest and most populous continent, with about 15% of the world's humans. According to the statistics of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Welfare (DESA), as quoted by African Development Bank (2014), by 2040 Africa will have the world's largest workforce, surpassing China and India. Africa is also the world's youngest region, and in the mid 2011 the continent had the world's 10 youngest countries by population. Within the continent, East and West Africa will be the youngest regions. A large "youth bulge" in which 60% of the population is made up of the youth is growing very rapidly.

On education, the DESA data show that 5.3 million African youth graduate from high school (only 23% of the children are enrolled in primary education). 38.4 million children would enter the primary school by 2017.

The phenomenal global uptake of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) as a strategic vehicle for expansive and comprehensive development through enhanced access to education and training have shown dividends in many parts of the world. Developmental outcomes in the developed economies and in Asia have highlighted the importance of open learning and distance education in helping to solve challenges of social dislocation, poverty, conflict, and marginalisation, as well as achievement of the human development goals especially with regards to Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) now replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Many of the countries of the developing world did not achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015. In economically poorer countries, an estimated 72 million children are not in school. It is also recorded that about 758 million adults still lack basic literacy skills – more than three quarters of whom live in only 15 countries. Nigeria, as an E9 country (one of the world's 9 most populous developing countries), has its own fair share of this statistics as follows:

- Nigeria's population grows by 2.7 % annually according to the UN Bureau of Statistics and the UN Population Division. It is projected that our population will double by the year 2066.
- Currently we have over 110 million youth under the age of 25 years and should rise to over 200 million in 50 years' time.
- 22.1million out of 42.1 million Nigerian children are in primary schools;
- Out of 33.9 million Nigerians eligible for secondary education, only 10.4 million are attending.
- Nigeria, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2013, has the highest rate of out-of-school children in the world.
- Nigeria requires about 1.4 million primary and secondary school teachers and 456, 500 tertiary education teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2013, ES NCCE, 2012), and
- Of all the students who sat for SSCE examinations, from 2006 to 2016, less than 25 per cent passed with credits in Mathematics and English.

## 9.2 Rising enrolment

While all the advantages listed in Section 8.0 above on Justification can be translated into core needs of Nigeria, the realities of current development in Nigeria indicated that four main areas can be regarded as critical, high priority needs. These are:

- massive higher education provisions
- teacher education to service the universal basic education (UBE)
- primary education
- national network of technology infrastructure to enhance community and rural development as well as provide avenues for distance education.

It is an open secret that the formal classroom-bound higher education provisions in Nigeria have failed to cope with the tremendous need for higher education. The data available for 10 years ago indicated that our institutions of higher learning (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education) have only been able to cope, on the average, with about 17 per cent of admission requirements as illustrated by Figures 2, 3 and 4 below. Information on the current situation is that not much progress has been made as we are only able to accommodate about 25 % of those who apply for places in our higher institutions.

As can be discerned from the data, over 80 per cent of those who apply to our institutions of higher learning cannot be accommodated, not necessarily because they are not qualified but due to gross inadequacies in resources and facilities. There is a limit to which any one classroom or lecture theatre can accommodate at any one particular time and location.

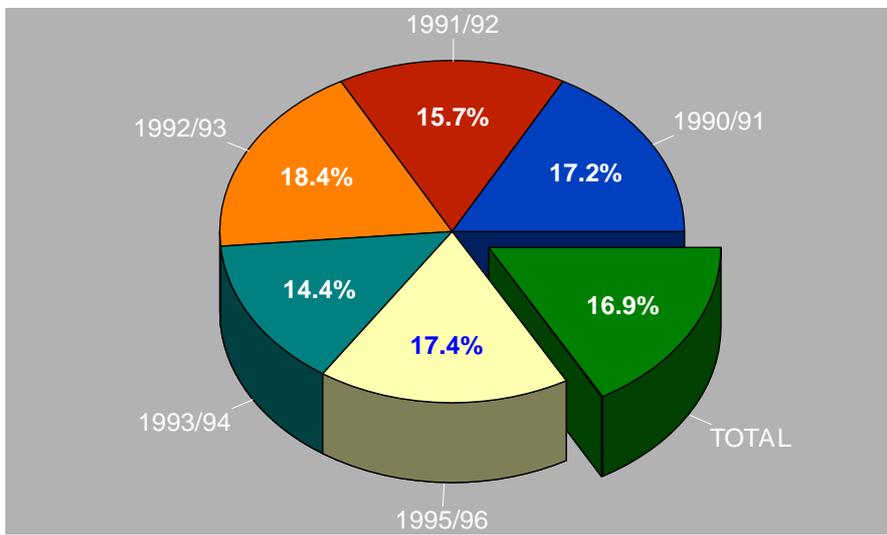


Figure 2: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Universities

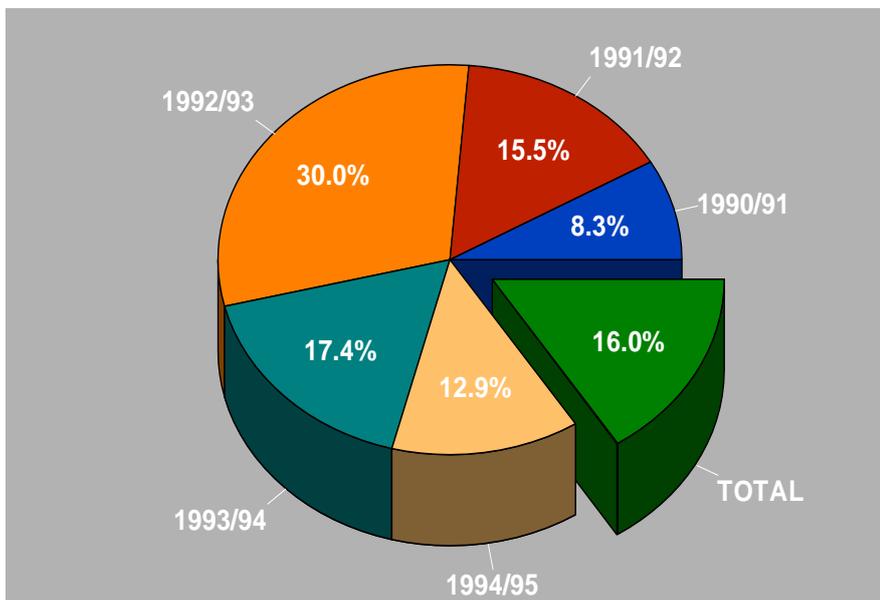


Figure 3: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Polytechnics

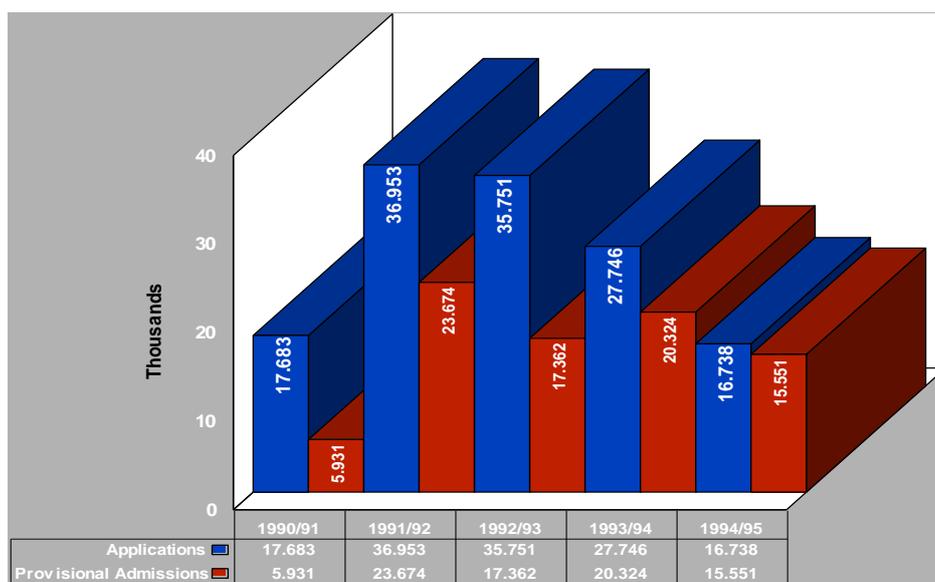


Figure 4: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Colleges of Education

In spite of the discouraging SSSCE and NECCO annual examination results, Nigeria continues to have huge and continually increasing number of applicants to the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) for admission into tertiary institutions. On the average, out of over 1.5million Nigerians seeking admission to tertiary institutions, only about 26.5 per cent are successful.

### **9.3 Lifelong learning**

The third index of indispensability is life-long learning which has taken the world by storm and now making its way to mainstream educational provisions in many countries of the world.

Lifelong Learning is characterised by making learning a continuous lifelong activity, learning through a flexible, easily accessible mode, development of a 'Learning' or 'Knowledge Society, a global movement towards ODL, and the fact that we all need to make to cope with the constant change in life.

The need, therefore, to successfully manage our daily living in today's world calls for making learning a continuing lifelong activity. Lifelong learning should therefore not be seen as a privilege or a right but a necessity for every individual - young or old- to meaningfully live with the astronomic pace of change we face daily in the classroom, on the job, in the home, in the immediate community, and in the worldwide society.

## **10.0 The Challenges and Way Forward for ODL in Tertiary Institutions**

Taken together, all the chilling consequences and frightfully disturbing details and statistics listed out above point clearly to one thing: Nigeria must re-strategise, re-focus and re-tool herself in readiness to avert the ominous dark clouds hovering over us in the use of education for national development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Given the huge numbers of unmet demand for education at all levels staring us in the face, there will not be enough resources to build all the classrooms, all the furnishing and all the infrastructure needed to meet the needs of the population. Besides, there will not be time and people to train all the teachers and lecturers and other ancillary staff needed to work in the educational establishments. The only answer, known to nations ready to confront their educational needs, that we know is ODL.

Unfortunately, time is not at the mercy of Nigeria and while population and lack of infrastructure and other resources are overtaking our strides of achievement made so far in education and indeed in ODL, a lot must be done within a very short time to effectively arrest the impending implosion in education, and by implication, in other aspects of our national life.

In order to guarantee a rosy future for ODL in Nigeria and is being used effectively to tackle our national development issues through human resource development, several things must be done. The list is long but due to time, space and prioritisation of the things to be done, I have limited my choice of the number to be discussed to just seven. These have been treated as Challenges and the Way Forward for each of them as follows:

**Challenge and Way Forward No 1:**

***Expanding existing ODL institutions, establishing new ones, and providing facilities and spaces using reliable statistics of those needing higher education in Nigeria.***

Given the facts as stated earlier, Distance Education in Nigeria could be said to be at the primary stage. All over the world, ODL is at the 5<sup>th</sup> stage – that is the stage of the use of modern sophisticated Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). For Nigeria to benefit from the expected gains of ODL there is a need to leap frog to this 5<sup>th</sup> stage of ODL in order to cope with the demands and delivery of teaching and learning at a distance. For over a decade now, the nation had become used to the often quoted statistics of those who registered and sat the JAMB UME examination and the very few numbers that eventually get admitted into the universities. The message is loud and clear: there are only approximately 25% as available spaces. The NOUN and other Distance Learning Centres and Institutes by their mandate can serve the country well in absorbing most of those candidates that are not able to gain admission into the conventional institutions.

It is evident in Nigeria that the results of candidates in the final public examinations like WASC/ SSCE, and NECO especially candidates in public schools often have been abysmally disappointing. The Roadmap document shows that less than 24% of candidates who sat for these examinations between 2000-2004 made the required five credits including Mathematics and English (p.56). This means that in actual fact, not all candidates who registered for the UME are ready, and qualified for admission into conventional universities. This is where the need for new statistics arises. The nation needs to

be told what percentage of those applying for UME are qualified to go into a closed system - the type our conventional universities represent. Once we have this new statistics, there is need to carefully examine how Open and Distance Learning (ODL) can come to the rescue.

At the moment, close to 20 institutions of higher learning, and in particular, universities now have or are working on becoming dual mode systems to both use ODL and the traditional face-to-face as instructional modes to build the enormous human capital needed for development in Nigeria. Many more institutions of higher learning should be encouraged to become dual mode, while those advanced in ODL, such as NOUN (serving as the arrow head and playing the motherhood role), Ahmadu Bello University, University of Lagos, University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Maiduguri should assist and support the new and emerging ones.

#### **Challenge and Way Forward No 2:**

##### ***Need for Integration of Distance Learning to the Education System***

Open and distance learning in Nigeria, in reality, is still in its infancy and at the periphery of the education system. This makes distance learning under-valued and under-utilised. Integration of distance learning mode with the conventional face-to-face mode will reduce the resistance to the innovation and will do much to overcome the negative perception about distance education. The entrenchment of distance education in all facets of our education, as has been done in other countries, will offset the notion that distance education is of inferior status and is likely to overcome the attitudinal barriers and institutional resistance to distance learning especially among professional groups who argue that educational quality cannot be maintained, distance learners cannot adapt, and that time tested methods are better. We need to pass a law that ODL must become mainstream as has been done in the Philippines recently. Our ODL policy, as part of the National Policy on Education requires remodeling urgently for a comprehensive review of the philosophy and goals of ODL in a country such as ours with abundance of resources to use education as a developmental strategy.

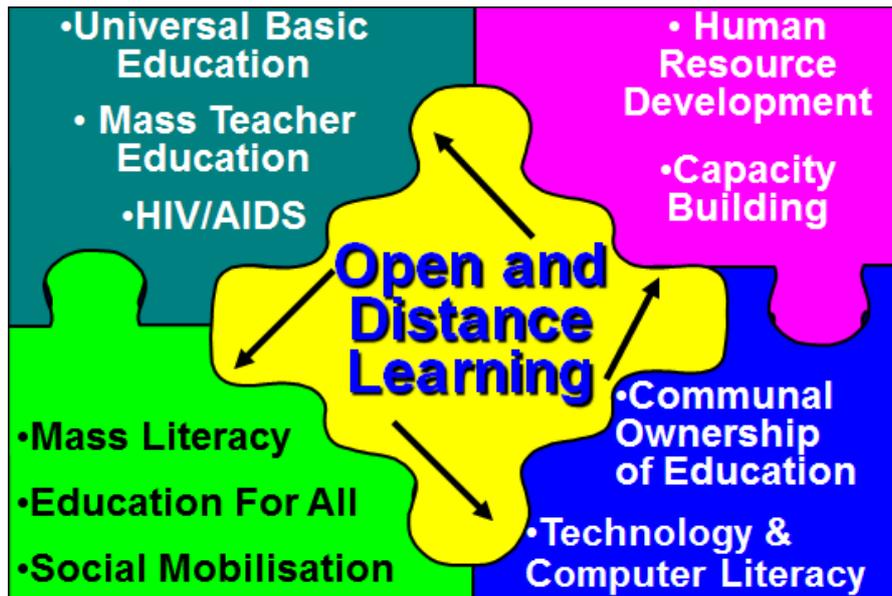


Figure 5: The versatility of ODL as Central focus for Solving National Educational Needs

As shown in Figure 5 above, ODL must be tailored to our national needs; it must be used to enhance access to flexible, equitable, cost effective education; it must be directed towards political expediency, public purpose and nation's focus. It should now be government's priority as a means to achieving the goals of the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference called the Conference of Parties 21 (COP21), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2063 (AUC/ENECA/NEPAD), and Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016).

### **Challenge and Way Forward No 3:**

#### ***A New Paradigm Required: Open School, Open Colleges of Education and Open Polytechnic***

After nine years of basic education and three years of senior secondary, students who failed to make the required credits at the end of the senior secondary are not often allowed to repeat classes by going back to secondary school to attend classes again and re-sit the examination. They are expected to fend for themselves and re-take the examinations. For many candidates and their parents, this is a source of huge economic loss, if not wastage. In the country today, there are millions of students in this category. We need research to know the actual figure. But more importantly is that we need a new paradigm to approach the situation, handle the issue and solve the problem. This is where, using ODL, the Open Schooling, Open College of Education and Open Polytechnic strategy comes into focus. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has emphasised that "open schooling is neither a second chance nor a second choice possibility but is the only option that can help us to achieve *Education for All*" (COL, 2008).

In a similar vein, a country that needs to develop all its resources and potential must critically consider its middle level human resources. At the moment the economic development of Nigeria is limping because of the dearth of qualified and well trained teachers, technicians and technologists to adequately shoulder the development of the technical backup for all our sectors especially the oil and gas which Nigeria so heavily depends upon. At the moment the technicians who work in our oil and gas sector come from overseas including countries such as South Africa, Malaysia, China and the Philippines. What other countries have done is to use ODL through the establishment of Open Polytechnic, to develop its human resources in this area. Nigeria must of necessity look in this direction as it has tremendous advantages for us. New Zealand, the first country to establish an Open Polytechnic, and all others which have emulated them, has wonderful success stories to tell.

Establishing an Open College of Education to massively train teacher for the primary and early secondary education system should be considered. All these plans are contained in the Federal Ministry of Education Blueprint and Implementation Plan for the National Open & Distance Learning Programmes for the nation.

#### **Challenge and Way Forward No 4:**

#### ***The Massification and Democratisation of Higher Education as Per the NPE and the African Higher Education Summit***

It is obvious from all we have discussed that Nigeria needs to put in place a large-scale mass higher education and to enhanced the open and distance learning system robust enough to allow for a comprehensive and cost-effective use of the infrastructure to be laid. This will guarantee that the massification of higher education and the democratisation of access to tertiary education, as laid down in the National Policy on Education and as agreed upon by the African Higher education Summit of 2015 are successfully and efficiently implemented.

If we massively open up access to higher education and as mentioned above, universities become dual mode and new ODL institutions established, they will be seen to be fulfilling the policy thrust of the country as explicitly stated in the NPE, which now has a section dedicated to ODL Policy.

As far back as 2004, continental-wide discussion on the issue of access to higher education was held at the All Africa Ministers of Education conference on open and distance learning which took place in Cape Town, South Africa. The discussion which was carried on by subsequent Ministers of Education conferences since then seemed to have come to some significant resolutions at An African Higher

Education Summit held recently in 2015 in Dakar, Senegal to deliberate upon how to move higher education forward in Africa. The Summit noted an “Unprecedented growth” in enrolment in African higher education institutions which has risen markedly over the last 15 years. It was reviewed that enrolment has grown approximately 170% from 3.53 million students in 1999 (2.25 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.28 million in North Africa) to 9.54 million in 2012 (6.34 million in sub-Saharan and 3.2 million in North Africa). In spite of this, the Summit stressed the need to keep pace with the continuing growth in student enrolment in African universities in order to absorb the increasing demand for higher education. In this regard, the massive establishment and use of ODL in higher education becomes a necessity rather than an option for Africa countries. This is even more compelling for Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa. In view of this astronomical development in higher education enrolment in Africa, the Summit strongly suggested that “It is therefore critical to:

- Develop a high quality, massive, vibrant, diverse, differentiated, innovative, autonomous and socially responsible higher education sector that will be a driving force [in achieving the continent’s long-term development goals].
- Produce the human capital required for the continent’s inclusive and sustainable development, democratic citizenship, and repositioning as a major global actor.”

The summit’s action plan, which directly points to the need to embrace ODL, seems to have as its focus the achievement of the goals of the Agenda 2063 which is a collaborative initiative of the AUC, ENECA and NEPAD.

#### **Challenge and Way Forward No.5:**

##### ***The Use of Information and Communications Technology for ODL in Higher Education***

It is becoming increasingly necessary to stress the role of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in the delivery of instruction by ODL especially as all the seductive modern technologies are being adopted and adapted for ODL without any guiding policy. A word of caution I must say here is that ICT is merely the medium and not the message. The way it is conceived for use, ICT is supposed to be an answer to instructional delivery at a distance either synchronously or asynchronously. However, it does appear that later day converts to the use of ICT in ODL make us believe that technology is either an end in itself or has just come into ODL. Nothing can be further from the truth.

Since the beginning of distance education by correspondence, the range of communication technologies available for education and their use in various instructional environments is quite

impressive. Some of them are more used than others while for many of the reported cases they are used either in limited circumstances or as pilot. Cost and other environmental reasons may have forced this limitation. It must be noted that, especially in developing countries, the lack of capacity to utilise the range of technologies also account in the main for their irregular use in ODL instruction.

The communication technologies which have been or are still being used in ODL include:

- Audio (Radio AM/FM, Audiotape, Packet Radio, Compact Disk, Talkback Radio, 2-way Radio, Mobilsat, Telephone, Answering Machine, Voice Mail, Audio-conference),
- Audio Visual/Video (Slides/Still Video, Videotape, Television, Teletext, Talkback TV, Videodisc, CD TV, VCD, DVD Videoconference, Audiographic),
- Data & Computing (File Transfer/Storage, Stand-alone PC, Electronic Mail, CAL, CMI, CD-ROM, WWW, Computer Conference),
- Image (Electronic Whiteboard, Facsimile, Imaging), Text/Print/Communications (Cable Network - Local, Cable Network Wide area, Cable Network International, Satellite), and
- Multimedia (etc VCD, DVD, Mobile Computing, Wireless communication, Satellite Technology, mobile telephony)

Of all the technologies, the versatility of the computer has continued to amaze even the computer enthusiasts. Digital technologies made possible with the use of computers is creating new media and making all modern industries such as entertainment, telecommunications, publishing, social media and news to converge. Computers have made the invention and integration of technologies possible resulting in new products which combine digitised audio, video, image, animation and data. Wireless interneting is now possible with wireless Ethernet. These are exciting times to say the least. And technology continues to exert a romantic and seductive appeal to all, none the least educators.

Many advocates of computer-mediated distance education emphasise its positive aspects and understate the kinds of communicative and technical capabilities and work required by students and faculty. There are few systematic analytical studies of students who have experienced new technologies in higher education. Cutting-edge technology (e.g., digital communications and learning technologies) enables the implementation of distance education to reach more diverse populations and to provide more available learning environments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The use of information and communications technology in distance teaching must meet a specific purpose, chart a definite path to realise a specific goal, and must use a cognitively sound justification within a defined context. The issue is not just that of hardware and software, it encompasses appropriateness, values to be added to learning, competent technical and instructional development staff, cost effectiveness, readiness to be familiar and use the new learning environment, and consideration about the social and cultural milieu in which the technology is put to work. The introduction of communication technologies in distance education imposes an additional demand on staff and students. These demands may not have been provided for by the institution and are often regarded by teachers as extra burden to their normal work. For example, there is a need to shift from the old paradigm of being the centre of teaching to being at the periphery and to become a facilitator or manager of student learning. Time and new skills are needed to develop new instructional materials, and the constant use of communication technologies such as e-mail and computer conferencing or video-conferencing multiplies workload.

What all these mean, as concluded a decade ago by Bates (1995,) is that without a definite plan for capacity building in the use of ICT in ODL their utilisation and effects to be derived from their appropriate and efficient use will continue to be minimal if not marginal. I cannot agree more with the conclusion.

A major issue in the use of technology in ODL in Nigeria is the limited penetration of the internet technology into the society. This is closely followed by the lack of capacity by the academic and managerial staff in ODL institutions. This why Nigeria is lagging behind in the use of ICT in ODL.

As reviewed by Briamoh (2015), many if not most African countries are not ready in any form to embrace ICT for educational purpose let alone for economic development. For example, the 2015 report released recently by the World Economic Forum (WEF) which measured how countries are performing in leveraging ICT for social and economic impact, showed that 143 countries were compared globally. However, only one country from sub-Saharan Africa, Mauritius (45) is in the top half. South Africa, one of the emerging economies in development programmes on the continent, has dropped to third in Africa, one place behind Seychelles and down five places at 75<sup>th</sup> on the Network Readiness Index (NRI) ranking. Nigeria, a giant in Africa, came 119 on that index due to many obvious reasons and observable factors and far behind smaller African countries, such as Uganda, Zambia, The Gambia, Senegal, Botswana, Namibia, Ghana, Kenya and Morocco. The ranking

measured the capacity of the 143 countries in the application of ICT but found such efforts to be hampered by, among other things, (a) low level of affordability (b) low government focus (c) no internet access in schools and (d) unavailability of bandwidth (<http://techcabal.com/2015/04/15/south-africa-moves-to-75th-place-on-the-network-readiness-index/>).

Unless a concerted effort is made for the acquisition, capacity building and pervasive use of ICT in our ODL, Nigeria shall continue to trail the developed world and this will significantly have negative effect in our implementation of ODL.

**Challenge and Way Forward No.6:  
New Approach to Course Material Design**

One of the elements distinguishing ODL from traditional classroom instruction is that ODL relies heavily on course materials. Course materials are developed using different approaches but of recent, the influence of ICT has become quite pervasive. Many people who instruct in ODL or develop policies on the use of ICT in ODL may fall into the trap of using yesterday’s tools for today’s work. This is like using analogue protocols in a digital world. Contemporary course material development demand that web-based systems and technology are used. There are those who simply translate the pedagogy of the face-to-face instruction into that of the use of ICT in ODL. They clearly are not the same and the capacity for web instruction must be used. This is what I have termed as ‘webagogy’.

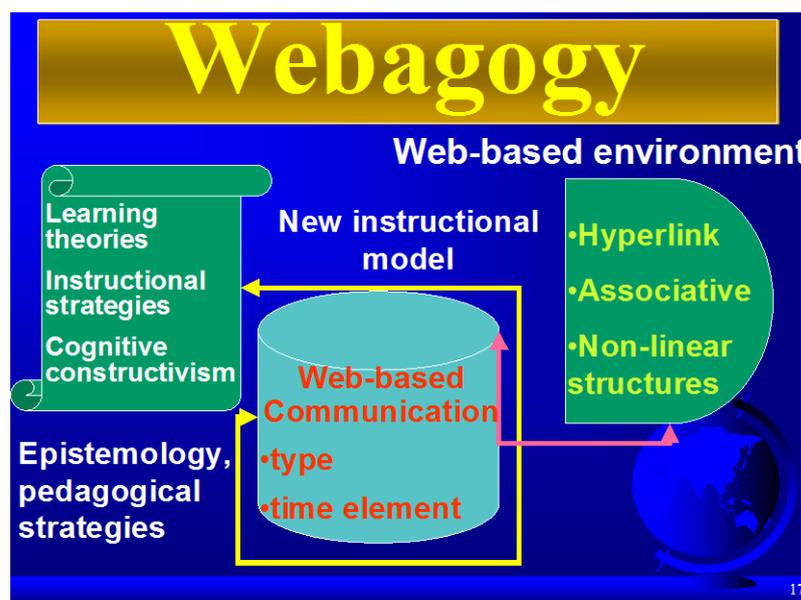


Figure 6: The components of Webagogy as tool for new web-based instructional development

Bork and Britton (1998) have accused those developing courses on the Web of often being confused about the difference between delivering information and facilitating learning. One possible reason for this confusion may well be the continuing use of traditional pedagogical principles of lectures and textbooks which basically deliver information. While this may be appropriate for many e-commerce oriented Web-based advertisements, it is definitely not satisfactory for Web-based instruction. Effective Web-based instruction must integrate three crucial elements - epistemology, pedagogical strategies suitable for the Web, and the characteristics of a Web-based teaching and learning environment - to create a new instructional model (See Figure 6 above). Perhaps what we now need more than anything else as we integrate technology, especially the Web, into our open and distance teaching and learning is *Webagogy*.

*Webagogy* should aim to harness all the viable theories and ideas about information processing, knowledge representation and symbolic reasoning, cognitive constructivism, and the use of associative, hyperlinking, and non-linear features of the Web environment to create a learning environment which supports the learning needs of all students. Our new crop of webagogues should not only find ways and means of applying prescriptive theories and strategies to transmit knowledge (Miller and Miller, 1999), but should also view knowledge as consensus which accommodates multiple perspectives. Miller and Miller (1999) suggest that Web-based communication (instructor-learner, learner-content and learner-learner communication, and time element of synchronous vs. asynchronous) must form the bridge between learning theories and strategies and hyperlinkages. Webagogy entails the training of a new cohort of multimedia instructional designers who specialise in Web-based technology for non-traditional instruction and learning modes.

#### **Challenge and Way Forward No.7:**

##### ***Effective and Efficient Management of the Dividend of Demography***

Due to the nature of classroom-based (brick and mortar) higher education, the carrying capacities of the various universities are always quite low. The total carrying capacity for all the 143 Universities in Nigeria is only 695, 449. This is at the backdrop of a total of the 2016 JAMB's candidates which stood at 1, 592, 305.

The breakdown of the 2016 JAMB applications is in Table 1 as follows:

Type of Institution	Number of Applicants	Percentage of the Total
Universities	1,557,017	97.78
Colleges of Education	17,673	1.11
Polytechnics	17,584	1.10
NID	31	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,592,305</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 1: Breakdown of 2016 JAMB Applications according to Type of Higher Institution**

It should be observed that the percentage of applicants preferring to go to the University instead of the Polytechnic and College of Education is on the increase. In 1996, 69.7 Per cent, 28.1 per cent and 2.2 per cent preferred to go to the University, Polytechnic and College of Education respectively.

There is in fact a worsening situation with the data for 2016 in which 97.78 per cent, 1.11 per cent and 1.10 per cent preferred the University, The Polytechnic and College of Education respectively. Clearly, what the applicants are saying is that almost all of them would prefer to go to the University. If this trend continues, several Polytechnics and Colleges of Education may have to close down. This is unthinkable in a country where we are terribly short of middle level technician and technologists and we are told that we require 1.4 million teachers for the primary and secondary levels.

The breakdown of the 2016 JAMB Applications by Universities is as shown on Table 2 below:

Ranking of Preferences	Type of University				
	Public University		Ranking of Preferences	Private University	
	Name	Ranking of Preferences		Name	No of Applicants
1	University of Ilorin	103,238	1	Covenant University	2,586
2	University of Benin	81,363	2	Afe Babalola University	1,304
3	Ahmadu Bello University	75,383	3	Babcock University	1,248
4	University of Nigeria	65,954	4	Igbinedion University	418
5	Bayero University	64,220	5	Madonna University	370
6	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	61,862	6	Bowen University	329

7	University of Lagos	60,659	7	Al-Qalam University	308
8	University of Ibadan	59,176	8	Baze University	277
9	Obafemi Awolowo University	45,924	9	Bingham University	247
10	University of Jos	40,366	10	Benson Idahosa University	204
	<b>Total</b>	<b>658,145</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>7,291</b>

**Table 2: Breakdown of 2016 JAMB Applications For the Top Ten of Preferences according to Type of Higher Institution**

The Tables above paint a very horrible picture of the top ten preferences (in descending order) in the choice of universities by the applicants who have applied through JAMB to public and private universities. In the Public University category, University of Ilorin is the most sought after while University of the Jos ranks number 10 most sought after. With regard to Private Universities, Covenant University is the number one most preferred university while Benson Idahosa University is the tenth most sought after institution.

In a country of 180 million people with 143 Universities, 95 Polytechnics, 26 Monotechnics and 149 Colleges of Education, the figures of applicants do not reflect that the educational system is taking full advantage of the dividend of demography. The total carrying capacity of all the universities is a paltry sum of 695, 449 (43.67%) of the total admission applications of 1,592,305.

Nigeria must take advantage of its enormous demography to ensure that every citizen willing and able has unfettered access to higher education. This will lead to the development of human capital as well as capacity building on a massive scale. But this can only be fully realised through the use of ODL at the tertiary level of education.

## **11.0 Conclusion**

The sum total of all that we have discussed in this paper is that the state of tertiary education, albeit, education in general, leaves much to be desired. It has been unable to respond adequately and effectively to the challenges of modern times and unfortunately, quality has progressively declined. Tertiary education is fundamentally critical to the development of Nigeria. Education, properly focused, creates the knowledge economy that is now the global focus.

The objectives of the UNESCO's new initiative of **SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)** cannot be met unless serious attention is paid to access and massification of tertiary education. The SDG's goal 4 concerns inclusive education as a crucial imperative for Nigeria. The way to address inclusive higher education is through the use of open and distance learning. As some people would say, we need to reposition tertiary education in Nigeria and once we are able to fix our educational issues, we would have fixed at least 75 per cent of our development issues.

Engaging ODL in our institutions of higher learning will give credibility and fruition to the prophecy of Cindy Jacobs which was made in October 2002 in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Part of the prophecy says:

'There is going to be a revival in Nigerian Universities and this revival will be of a large magnitude. That the revival in the universities will affect the secondary schools and primary schools. And God will change Nigeria to the next generation.'

Engaging ODL to massify and democratise educational access in Nigeria, is a very significant way for us to bring Cindy Jacobs prophecy to come true with its attendant advantages to higher education, the immediate community of every higher institution and Nigeria as a whole.

Thank you and my very best wishes.

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