

**POLICY ISSUES AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND
CHALLENGES IN INSTITUTING A DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM WITHIN A
CONVENTIONAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: THE EXPERIENCE OF BAYERO
UNIVERSITY, KANO**

By

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**Being a Paper Presented at the 7th Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning,
December, 2013 at Abuja, Nigeria**

Abstract

The emergence of open and distance education was a result of a combination of factors which are prevalent at both global and local levels. Principal among such factors are the two explosions namely, population and information. While the former was a function of the geometrical increase in birth rate, especially in developing nations, the later was occasioned by the revolution in information and communication technology. A third factor is the fact of the preponderance of knowledge-based economy that has accentuated competitiveness in life based on skill and professionalism, a phenomenon that generated greater need for lifelong and continuing education. In the Nigerian situation just like in all developing countries, population explosion has engendered an unprecedented and monumental rise in the social demand for education in the face of diminished carrying capacities in higher institutions of learning, especially the universities. The need for diversifying the opportunities for access to education became not only obvious but very compelling. Besides the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), a number of conventional universities have been compelled by the combined reasons above to introduce Open and Distance Education. This paper expounds the policies formulated, institutional arrangements made, the human resource engagement and development strategies employed and other necessary measures taken in Bayero University, Kano for the purpose of instituting its Distance Education Programme.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of open and distance education was a result of a combination of factors which are prevalent at both global and local levels. Principal among such factors are the two explosions namely, population and information. While the former was a function of the geometrical increase in birth rate, especially in developing nations, the later was occasioned by the revolution in information and communication technology. A third factor is the fact of the preponderance of knowledge-based economy that has accentuated competitiveness in life based on skill and professionalism, a phenomenon that generated greater need for lifelong and continuing education. In the Nigerian situation just like in all developing countries, population explosion has engendered an unprecedented and monumental rise in the social demand for education in the face of diminished carrying capacities in higher institutions of learning, especially the universities. The need for diversifying the opportunities for access to education became not only obvious but very compelling. Besides the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), a number of conventional universities have been compelled by the combined reasons above to introduce Open and Distance Education. The introduction of Open and Distance Education in conventional universities ordains a sort of convergence between the conventional and the distance models which Prasad (2003) asserts is a welcome development which results in the enrichment of both. This is the kind of arrangement that obtains in Bayero University, Kano. This paper expounds the policies formulated, institutional arrangements made, the human resource engagement and

development strategies employed and other necessary measures taken in Bayero University, Kano for the purpose of instituting its Distance Education Programme.

BAYERO UNIVERSITY KANO AT A GLANCE

Establishment of the University

The seed of Bayero University Kano was the Ahmadu Bello College set up in 1960, located within the School for Arabic Studies (SAS), in the old city of Kano. With the establishment of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1962, it was renamed Abdullahi Bayero College. In 1964 it moved to a temporary site at the old Kano Airport Hotel, admitting its first set of ten undergraduate students for a B.A. degree programme of Ahmadu Bello University. This first set graduated in 1966 but it continued as a faculty of ABU until 1980.

Vision

Bayero University shall be a world-class university in Africa, renowned for its excellence in teaching and research, and the quality of its products.

Mission

To provide world-class academic and professional training and community service, to conduct research for the advancement of society and to produce high quality human resources with entrepreneurial skills for the development of the community, the nation and humanity.

Core Values

Humility and Sacrifice; Discipline and Commitment; Integration and Internationalisation; Professionalism and Good Governance; Innovativeness and Creativity; Excellence and Best Practices.

POLICY FORMULATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ODL

The Bayero University Kano (BUK) Management Committee in its 40th meeting on 26th November, 2007 approved the report of the Professor Falola Committee of 2006 which was appointed to principally recommend to the Management how to warehouse all sub-degree programmes in the University, after making some modifications to it. This approval by the University Management was the basis for the establishment of the Centre which took off in September 2011 with the appointment of a Director, a Deputy Director and Five Heads of Department. The Centre was thus named **Centre for Continuing Education and Professional Development (CCEPD)** later renamed **Institute of Continuing Education (ICE)**. One of the Departments in this Institute is the Department of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and thus a Head of Department was also appointed for it, in the person of Dr. Ahmad Iliyasu, a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Education in the University whose specialization is in the area of Guidance and Counselling.

Mandate of the Institute

The Institute was therefore established with two essential mandates: (i) to take full charge of the conduct of all sub-degree and part-time degree and open and distance learning (ODL) programmes; (ii) to be organizing periodic professional development programmes like capacity building workshops, specialized short- courses for various categories of workers in the public and private sectors.

The Need and Timeliness of the ODL Program with Particular Reference to BUK

The challenges created by the phenomenon of population explosion and the increased awareness of the importance of education have necessitated the need to diversify the channels, means and approaches of disseminating education much as they dictate that we should explore the possibilities of boosting the carrying capacities of our institutions by creating more space for

accommodating as many students as possible in all their sorts, the young, the disadvantaged adults, the working class, the rural and the urban, etc. This assertion was indeed confirmed by Prasad (2003) when he stated that, “the revolution in Information and Communication Technologies, social demand for education for all and the need for lifelong continuing education resulted in the emergence of open learning as a new reality in the field of education” (p.xiii).

Just for the sake of illustration within the Nigerian context, let us examine the applications for admissions into Universities in two years, 2010 when the total number of applicants as reported by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) stood at 1,375,652. And in 2012 the figure rose to 1,503,931. What however may be quite alarming is the fact that **the Universities normally hardly admit up to 1/3 of the total number of applicants yearly**. These are the factors that inform the need for open education and distant learning programs in Nigeria in the recent years. It is only reasonable therefore, that Kano being the most populous state in the Country, as per the 2006 National Census, should as a matter of necessity institute this program. Since some six universities have gone ahead in this undertaking, none has started it in the North-western geo-political zone. Bayero University, Kano thought it should therefore set the pace in this regard and blaze the trail within the zone. The factors identified and discussed here provide the context within which the objectives ODL were defined and stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) as follows:

- Provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied.
- Meet special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work place.
- Encourage internationalization especially of tertiary education curricula.
 - Ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work.(NPE, 2004)

HUMAN RESOURCE ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Appointment of Full-time Lecturers: For the purpose of taking off of the ODL on a sound footing and effective conduct of teaching and instruction in the Institute, the University at the initial stage appointed **24** fulltime academic staff for it (the Institute). Out of this number **1** person is a **Lecturer 1**, another person an **Assistant Lecturer**, while the rest of the **22** are all Graduate Assistants. All the Graduate Assistants have been admitted into Master’s Degree programs in their respective areas of specializations and have all been awarded study fellowships. Three of them are studying overseas in **India, Malaysia and Jordan**. The only Assistant Lecturer among them has successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis in the Sudan. A couple of months ago three additional lecturers, all of whom are holders of doctorate degrees were appointed for the Institute and specifically for the purpose of the ODL. Two of them were

appointed as **Senior Lecturers**, while the third person was appointed as **Lecturer II**. Whereas the first two senior lecturers hold PhDs in **Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counselling** respectively, the third person has his PhD in Sociology. The appointments of several other additional PhDs are in the pipeline.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Being conscious of the fact that instituting ODL requires a great deal of expertise and professionalization the University made various sorts of arrangements and provisions for building the capacities of especially, the focal personnel in the program. These primarily include the Management Officers of the Institute namely, the Director, the Deputy Director, the Head of the ODL Department and the three other Heads of Department. The various capacity building activities are presented and explained below.

Study Tours and Visits within and Outside Nigeria

As part of capacity building for the focal personnel, a number of visits to sister universities that have had meaningful experiences in especially running part-time and distance learning programs were visited at different times within Nigeria in 2012 by the Director, the Deputy Director and the Heads of Departments of the Institute. The Universities visited are: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto, Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola, the University of Lagos, University of Abuja, and the University of Ibadan. The purpose of the visits was essentially to get acquainted with their experiences in offering part time degrees as in the case of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the University of Lagos, Usmanu Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto; and distance learning programs as in the case of Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola and the University of Abuja.

At the International Level two teams undertook visits to Universities that have made name in the area of Distance Education in Hyderabad, India. These are the Ambedkar Open University and the Distance Education Centre of the Osmania University. The first is acknowledged to be the First Open University in India. The first visit was undertaken by the Director of the Institute of Continuing Education – Dr. Salisu Shehu and the Head, Department of Open and Distance Learning – Dr. Ahmed Iliyasu in September, 2012. In Ambedkar, the two had interactions with the Vice Chancellor, the Director of Academic Affairs and sizeable number of faculty members of various specializations. They were then taken round the University to see the infrastructure, facilities and equipment put in place for the purpose of carrying out the entire ODL tasks and services. In the Osmania University, the two had a lengthy meeting with the Director of the Distance Education Centre.

A second round of visit to Ambedkar Open University was undertaken in February 2013 led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)- Professor Muhammmad Yahuza Bello. Other members of the team were Dr. Salisu Shehu, Director of the ICE, and Dr. Ado Dan- Isa, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. At this time some more crucial discussions around the possibility of

collaboration were made. All in all, and in specific terms the University is willing to collaborate with the various universities for the purpose of building the capacities of its staff with regards to ODL in areas like: (i) faculty exchange, (ii) development of course materials, (iii) online recruitment, (iv) application of multimedia in ODL, (v) establishment of student/learner support services, (vi) research collaboration on ODL, and (vii) administration and management of ODL.

Participation in Local and International Conferences and Workshops on ODL within and Outside Nigeria

Like in the case of visits and study tours, the University also sent its staff involved in the institutionalization of the ODL to both local and international seminars, conferences/summits and workshops on Open and Distance Education. At the local level, the Director of the ICE and the Head of ODL both attended a One Day Advocacy/Sensitization Forum on Open and Distance Education. It was organized by the Department of Open and Distance Education of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Abuja on 7th May, 2012. The theme of the Forum was: **“The Quality Imperatives of the Open and distance Learning Mode in the Nigerian University System”** Two major presentations were made namely, (i) **“Open and Distance Learning in the Nigerian University System”** by Dr. Suleiman-Ramon Yusuf, the Acting Director, Open and Distance Education, NUC, Abuja, and (ii) **“Balancing the Quality Issues on Capacity Building in ODL Practice: A Challenge to Higher Education in Nigeria”** by Professor Dele Braimoh, the UNESCO Chair of ODL, University of South Africa (UNISA).

At the international level, the Director and the Head, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Dr. Ahmed Iliyasu attended and presented papers at the Indus Global Education Summit at Hyderabad, India in September, 2012, organized by the Indus Foundation Inc. The titles of their papers respectively were: (i) **“An Overview of Teacher Education in Nigeria with Particular Reference to Bayero University, Kano”**, (ii) **Academic and Administrative Preparations for Instituting Open and Distance Education in Bayero University, Kano.**

As it were, the purpose of sending its staff that are primarily charged with the responsibility of institutionalizing the ODL in the University was essentially to get them acquainted with international best practices in Open and Distance Education. Instructively, this purpose was succinctly put by the President of the Indus Foundation in his message to the Summit when he says:

Exposure to new ideas, new concepts and more importantly to new experiences is the best means of education. When people of different nationalities, different ways of life and languages come together, and interact with one another, it results in a rich fusion of cultures....This leads to students widening their horizons as well. This will help even the veterans in the field of education administration.

In keeping with the same spirit and objective the University once again sent another team to the Indo-American Education Summit in February, 2013, also in Hyderabad, India. This time around the team was led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). Other members of the team were Dr. Bashir Galadanci, the Dean of the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Dr. Ado Dan-Isa, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Dr. Salisu Shehu, the Director, Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). All these are actually going to be involved in the BUK Open and Distance Learning Program. This is the reason that explains the concentration and participation of the team in Distance Education Panel in the Summit.

DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULA CONTENTS AND COURSE MATERIALS FOR THE ODL AND PART-TIME DEGREEES

This is the most significant and practical step taken in an effort at instituting the ODL in the University. The essential thing involved in this was development of course contents of each course that would be offered in either the ODL and the Part-time degree programs in according to the NUC Benchmark for Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). This entails an entire description of the various aspects of the course like its philosophy and its aims and objectives, its admission and graduation requirements, credit weightings of the course units and the actual scope and contents of the course. The various degree programs for both the ODL and the Part-time Degrees are presented below.

Degree Programs under Open and Distance Learning

1. B. A. Ed Arabic
2. B.A. Ed. English
3. B.A. Ed. Hausa
4. B. A. Ed. History
5. B. A. Ed. Islamic Studies
6. B. A. Ed. Geography
7. B.Sc. Ed. Economics

Degree Programs under Part-Time Degrees

1. B.A. Ed (Islamic Studies, Arabic, English, Hausa, Economics, etc.)
2. B. Sc. Economics.
3. B. Sc. Accounting
4. B. Sc. Public Administration
5. B. Sc. Business Administration
6. B. Sc. Nursing
7. B. Sc. Hospital Administration
8. B. Sc. Criminology and Security Studies
9. B. Sc. International Relations
10. B. Sc. Banking and Finance.
11. B.A. Ed. Early Child Care Education.

All these have been presented to the Vice Chancellor for submission to the University Academic Development Committee for its scrutiny and approval and onward presentation to the University Senate for its approval also, before their eventual take off within this year 2013.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER NECESSARY FACILITIES

In order to ensure a conducive and enabling environment for the commencement and development of the ODL, the University has dedicated an entire campus to the ICE. The premises of this campus located along one of the major streets of Kano City- the Aminu Kano Way is both spacious enough and easily accessible for effective functioning and development. Within this premises all necessary infrastructural facilities are provided. There is the administrative block that accommodates the offices of the Director, the Deputy Director, the five Heads of Department, the Secretary to the Institute and the other non-academic staff. Besides that, there are offices for all the academic staff in the Institute, including the ones that have been newly appointed. And more importantly there are four spacious lecture halls and a theater. Each of these has a capacity of 150 to 200 students. In addition to all these the University has procured a donation from the Kano State Government of 8 lecture halls each of which would accommodate 200 students, and 24 offices for academic staff. The construction work of these facilities has reached advanced stage.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

The accomplishments so far made as described above as well as the various achievements recorded are quite encouraging and promising. But as it is commonly known difficulties and constraints always abound whenever something is being initiated and is being established newly. This is even so when one is kick starting a huge and ambitious project like the one in question. Not all things can be done at once and also rapidly. There are therefore, in spite of the breakthroughs made, certain other critical needs that are yet to be met which are integral to the virtual learning process. These are the development of the course materials (i.e. The instructional modules in form of manuals), the establishment and development of the learner support system (lss) and the establishment and development of the e-learning environment. This entails establishing a standard e-laboratory and a functional virtual library. With the commitment already demonstrated by the university administration in executing the various aspects of the project, there are every reasons to believe that these pending tasks will be accomplished in due course.

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