FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING IN AN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME

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Abstract

There is bound to be a shift towards those courses that will provide the knowledge and skills for economic relevance and earning power. Commerce, science and technology are likely to be over-subscribed, once again at the expense of the humanities, whose relevance in a technology-driven world, seems to be diminishing steadily. When designing instruction for distance education, attention is often focused on the cognitive domain, as it is in "traditional" (face-to-face) instruction. What do the students need to know? Which instructional strategies will be most appropriate? Upon what performance criteria will learners be evaluated?

These are crucial issues, deserving of a designer's best efforts. Unfortunately, affective domain considerations are often completely ignored or, at best, treated as afterthoughts in the design process. Affective behaviours are difficult to conceptualise and to evaluate. Because of this, the most effort and time have gone into thinking about, studying, evaluating, and teaching the cognitive aspects of behaviour.' This phenomenon has serious implications on distance education programmes. Distance education students are confronted with learning situations very different from the 'traditional' schooling with which they are familiar, and the astute designer will recognize the need to explore aspects of instruction beyond the cognitive domain. This article will discuss the importance of cognitive, affective and psychomotor considerations to distance education, especially in the field of science and technology, focusing on learner motivation, communication patterns, and ethics.

The Concept of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)]

There are several approaches to defining the term, Open and Distance Learning, Creed (2001) defined distance learning as 'an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone far removed in space and/or time from the learners. On the other hand, Open Learning is defined as 'an organised educational activity, based on the use of teaching materials, in which the constraints on the learners are minimised in terms of access, entry, or time and place, pace, method of study, or any combination of these'. Thus, the concept of open and distance learning suggests an educational approach designed to reach learners in such places as homes, offices, shops, and so on (wherever they are), and provide learning resources for them to qualify without attending formal classes in person, or create opportunities for lifelong learning, irrespective of where or when they want to study. According to UNESCO (2002), open and distance learning represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Mudasiru (2006) defined distance learning as a term to describe the studentcenteredness of distance education and it deals with the use of print and electronic technologies to present individual lessons to learners at a distance. Correspondence study entails distance learning through postal subgroups, that is, learning at home and communicating with the instructor using print materials. Adebayo (2007a) defined open and distance learning as the type of education that takes place outside the conventional school system; it is imparted without necessarily having personal interaction with students or learners. The practice of ODL in Nigeria takes various forms, which include correspondence study education, distance learning (Sandwich programmes), Part-Time Teacher Training Programme (PTTP), Open University, weekend programmes, adult literacy education programmes, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and recently, e-learning. As a consequence, we can deduce that distance learning both shares the goals of the conventional school system, and also aims to provide access to a historically underserved, place-bound, and highly motivated population.

The Evolution of Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria

Distance learning is not a recent concept in Nigeria. Akinpelu (1982) indicated that the Department of Adult Education at the University of Ibadan first proposed the need for distance learning in 1960. The

programme was titled 'pilot correspondence programme in the Science subjects' to experiment in the field of science education at pre-university level and thereafter to expand gradually to certain other vital areas necessitating in-service training. This project was renamed 'Correspondence Courses Leading to University Degrees and Diplomas'. This notwithstanding, there had been correspondence colleges in Britain and other places that conducted correspondence courses for interested Nigerians through 'Rapid results' as well as others where courses in business related subjects and administration were obtained. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was first launched in 1983 but was suspended in 1985 by the military government. President Olusegun Obasanjo re-launched it in 2001 and NOUN now provides instruction for some 60,000 students. As at 2002 (ODL Paris 2002 report), the new United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) chair aims to build up the supply of skilled professionals to manage and design open and distance learning programmes through the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (Daniel, 2005). NOUN is the first fully-fledged university that operates in an exclusively open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education. The university focuses mainly on a distance teaching and learning system, and delivers its course materials via print in conjunction with information and communication technology (ICT). The National Open University of Nigeria currently has twenty-three study centres, which are stratified into the six geopolitical zones of the nation.

Significance of Open and Distance Learning to Education

UNESCO (2002) states, 'in efforts to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, open and distance learning may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstances, an appropriate substitute for the face-to-face methods that still dominates most educational systems'.
The relevance of ODL to Education is enumerated below.

I)   Access

It increases people's access to education. People who would have found it impossible to attend the conventional school system benefit from ODL. Many stakeholders in the education sector are interested in open and distance learning because it allows greater access to educational opportunities. This is in keeping with the stated objectives of the National Policy on Education that 'maximum efforts shall 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, e-learning and work study programmes'.

Ii)   Social Enhancement

Open and distance learning schemes hold a number of potential benefits for various stakeholders in the education and development process. To the learner, ODL means more freedom of access and thereby a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualifications. This in turn improves their social status. It is often a cheaper means of attending school for the student since he or she may not be able to leave his or her place of work to go to school full time. This is largely encouraged among men of the armed forces and other security agencies who register in large numbers for distance learning to enhance their social status.

iii)   Economic Growth

ODL is an avenue for institutions to improve their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). It is also an avenue for many people to become learned and be better workers in any profession they choose or are currently engaged in. Students are given opportunities and may read up to whatever level they want, hence, contributing to the economic growth of their nation through better performance. This is rather beneficial to employers, because it offers the possibility of organising in-service training for their staff, without necessarily releasing them for long periods of productive time. With sufficient number of employees being trained, ODL is often the most cost-effective means. For the government and educational policy makers, the system is a panacea for the perennial problem of provision of equitable and accessible education in an affordable and cost-effective way. ODL has also reduced poverty levels among teachers, since programmes are attended while at work. The government gains through incurring little cost on training but develops the manpower to improve the economic situation of the nation. Prisoners or inmates enjoy distance learning programmes. This makes them useful to their nations by contributing their quota to the development and economic growth of their nation during and after release. ODL has given tremendous supports to teacher training in the drive to implement Universal Basic Education programmes, as the case is in Nigeria. ODL is working towards the development of education and life skills for youths and the management of the available natural resources.

FACTORS FACING IMPLEMENTATION O

The problems that need to be addressed for the effective implementation of

ODL are discussed under internal and external problems -

I. Internal Factors
a) The Teacher Factor

Absence of teachers trained in computer skills to teach the practical aspects of computer skills, coupled with non-availability of computers and allied tools at the centre, militate against actual realisation of the goals and objectives of ODL. This calls for an urgent need for all employed and practising teachers to brace themselves for the challenges of information and communication technology. Also, the successful implementation of any curriculum is dependent on the informed and rational choice the classroom teacher makes about curriculum programmes and materials required for use in school. Due to poor remuneration of teachers, they resort to selling their textbooks at exorbitant rates, which does not augur well for the students.

b) School Factor

The removal of government subsidies for staff and students' welfare in some West African countries has greatly affected higher institutions that were at the verge of collapse. Hence, ODL was used as a revenue generating venture and a way of increasing their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). The UNESCO (2001) study submitted that the lack of government funding has hindered the quality and effective coordination of distance education initiatives. The institutions and their location do not always provide hostel accommodation, the conditions of the classrooms and environment are always very poor. In fact, water, electricity and cleaners are not available. In addition, library facilities are not provided for students to update their knowledge.

c) Managerial Factor

The major task of a manager is to match educational purpose, administrative roles and teaching methodology to achieve the predetermined goals and objectives of the organisation. The question is how effective are the managers of ODL in their various institutions? Borisade's (2007) study revealed some ineffectiveness in the triangle of manager-staff, manager-student, and manager-community relationships. This was largely due to some extraneous variables, which include- temporary lecturers, non-availability of accommodation for students during the programme and host community's outrageous cost in the provision of accommodation for staff and students. The lecturers also pose the problem of achieving the objectives due to faulty implementation. Most of the lecturers are interested in the monetary benefits, to the detriment of what the students would achieve. The criteria for admission of students are not the same as those of conventional institutions. Primary Six, General Certificate of Education (GCE), National Examinations Council (NECO), Grade Two Teachers Certificate, West African Senior Secondary School Certificate (WASSC) holders were admitted for six year programmes, especially sandwich programmes. Entrance examinations were not conducted for admission into ODL programmes. This casts doubts on the credibility of the students' admission. The time schedule for the programme is inadequate and insufficient for the lecturers and students to adequately complete their course work. Managements admit outrageous number of candidates, which increased the staff-student ratio and overstressed the available human and non-human resources. When the regular university lecturers cannot effectively cope with the teaching of all the courses that have to be taught, ad-hoc lecturers have to be locally recruited (Borisade, 2007). This stems from the profit-making motive behind the establishment of distance learning programmes by institutions and it is gradually taking precedence over academic and professional reasons. Moreover, students' results are usually delayed, lectures and examination timetables are haphazardly prepared and these directly or indirectly affect students psychologically. The National Universities Commission (NUC) education reform programme (Draft Benchmarks and Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) posed problems for the managers. According to Adebayo (2006b) most lecturers were not aware of the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) needed by their institutions.

D) Student Factor

The available facilities are not enough for the students, especially during examinations, which gives room for all sorts of examination malpractices such as cheating, copying, bringing in scripts, impersonation, and so on. Also, the increase in enrolment makes teaching and learning difficult for the lecturers and the students. Most students too lack a maintenance culture. The available facilities are vandalised and misused by them. Students' study habits are poor, course materials are crammed just to pass. Students do not consider it necessary to attend orientation/induction courses at the beginning of their studies. Some of the students are ignorant on the use of the library and library facilities. Students are not interested in the acquisition of knowledge and skills; rather they are essentially interested in the acquisition of certificates (Obemeata 2000).

II. External Factors
a) Energy related factors
Power supply in most African countries appears erratic. Successful ODL cannot be assured without the use of information and communication technologies (radio, television, computers). Incessant power failure creates problems for the effective integration of most instructional materials in the delivery of ODL. The poverty level makes alternative sources of electricity, such as generators, unavailable to them.

b) Low TeleDensity
Access to telecommunication tools such as telephone, the internet and computers among others, is still at its lowest ebb. Even with the infusion of Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication, access is still limited, services are yet to be perfect and the service charge is too high for users.

c) Lack of Consistency in Programme and Policy Implementation
Lack of continuity of past government programmes by succeeding and incumbent administrations is a bane to realising the goal of education in Africa. This goes a long way in affecting the implementation of the Open and Distance Learning

d) Economic Factor

Low level funding of ODL is as a result of inadequate budgetary allocation by the government to that sector. The poor state of the national economy had pauperised most Africans. An average middle-income earner cannot afford basic technological tools such as computers. The computer is still a luxury in some institutions, offices and homes. This makes the integration of necessary online resources (internet, email) into open and distance learning difficult. Most of the approaches adopted in the dissemination of instructions in ODL programmes, such as the purchase of books, instructional materials, and provision of facilities such as lecture rooms and laboratory equipment (in some cases), are capital intensive. UNESCO's (2002) study supported this observation when it stated that the cost per average student of distance education is more expensive than that of conventional institutions. Students consider it as highly exploitative and a way of making money by the institutions and the lecturers.

e) Poor Postal System
Although improvements have been made in the postal services, the level of services is yet to attain international standards because the services cannot guarantee efficient two-way communication between distance learners and distance education institutions.

f) Public Image
In some circles, the certificates of those who attend open and distance learning are not valued. They believe that ODL students are not subjected to, or rather, not exposed to all the practical aspects of some courses. Some believe that their certificates were bought, that is, a rich student could easily find his way out. ODL students are not also exposed to direct university environments such as libraries, laboratories, university cyber-cafés, students' unions and lecture theatres. Hence, some employers and the Teaching Service Commission do not upgrade their staff who have acquired additional qualifications through ODL. Some secondary school principals do not recognise graduates from sandwich programmes because they believe they were not well tested (Borisade, 2007).

III Other Factors
a) The Number Of Learners Enrolled
The greater the enrolment, the more the fixed administrative costs of the system, and the resources invested in developing the curriculum and learning materials will be spread across the student population, thus bringing down the unit cost per student. However, the nature of the cost structure is such that most of the economics of scale are reaped at an early stage. As student numbers rise, so the gain in efficiency falls. Moreover, scale may bring its own complexities with the result that costs per student may actually begin to rise.

B) The Size of The Curriculum
The broader the curriculum on offer, the more courses will need to be offered, and the greater the volume of course materials that will need to be developed. The cost per student will therefore rise unless the increase in the number of courses is compensated by an increase in the number of students.

c) The Number of Years Over Which Courses are Offered Without Change
One of the advantages of capturing knowledge in text, audio, video or computerised formats is that the material then exists as a more or less

permanent record, and can be used again and again to teach successive cohorts of students. It makes economic sense to re-use the materials from year to year, so that the cost of developing the materials can be spread over more and more years (and more and more students). However, this can prove to be a drawback if the format does not allow for easy changes to be made to the materials, and if once the course is launched, it becomes clear that poor initial design leads to the need to revise the course materials. To avoid this possibility, materials may be developmentally tested before they are produced in bulk. This is obviously a sensible strategy where it is intended that materials will last several years, or where materials are being used in a mass educational campaign.

Furthermore, the more years the materials are used, the greater the danger that they will become outdated. This is likely to be more serious in some subjects (for example, Computing, Social Sciences, Education) than in others (Mathematics, History). The extent to which this is a serious problem or not is to some extent affected by the approach taken to the design of the courses, and the ease with which changes can be made to materials. Modularisation of the materials' format, and the use of electronic formats, can make revision that much easier. Indeed, one of the advantages of online course formats is that development is no longer seen as a pre-presentation stage in the lifecycle of a course, but as something that happens continuously.

d) Containment of Course Development Costs

The range of materials to be developed can be reduced by using existing textbooks in conjunction with wrap-around materials that act as a commentary on a commercially produced textbook. This will reduce the costs of developing and producing course materials. This is certainly an option where the target population is capable of learning independently, but it may work less well with less experienced learners, who tend to benefit from more structured and integrated materials.

e) Sharing Course Development Costs

Another approach is to try to share the costs of developing course materials. One way is to design the materials so that they can be published in book form. This approach, often undertaken in partnership with a commercial publisher, generates income from sales, which can then be used to offset the cost of developing and producing the materials. However, the income from royalties on sales to the public is usually relatively small. Another approach is to enter an agreement with another institution to share the development

effort. In theory, collaborative course development is an excellent way of reducing costs; in practise, such collaboration can often be very difficult to get off the ground. Finally, it may be possible to buy materials that have been produced by another distance teaching institution. Again, while in theory an attractive proposition, the rights charged for use of such materials can be significant, and there is some evidence that unless the number of copies required is relatively low, it can be cheaper to develop courses in-house. The free courseware initiative could help here. However, bought-in materials may also raise curriculum and cultural issues, and may need to be adapted and/or translated. The costs of adaptation and translation should not be underestimated.

f) Technology Choice

Since distance education methods first emerged in the 1840s, the range of media and technology employed has widened. Each technology has its own cost structure, so the choice of technology has an impact on the costs of the system. The cost of a given technology will depend on the equipment used (and the extent to which that equipment has to be sourced from abroad), the running costs of the technology, and the labour costs involved in the development, production and delivery of materials carried by the technology. For example, it generally takes a teacher more time to write a text that will occupy a student for one hour, than it takes to develop a one-hour lecture; and it generally takes longer to write an e-mail response to a student query, than it takes to respond to a student orally. More complex technologies may also require teams of technicians and specialist producers to support the teacher. Also, a given media (text, audio, video) may be produced and delivered in a variety of formats with implications for the costs of the materials. There is evidence that the costs of developing and producing materials in any given media varies enormously for all kinds of reasons, and so it is very difficult to make any categorical statements about the relative cost of media. Generally, print, audio-cassettes and pre-recorded Instructional Television (that is, video-taped lectures) are the only media that are relatively low-cost for courses with populations of from under 250 students a year to over 1,000 students a year.

In addition, radio is also likely to be low-cost on courses with populations of 1,000 or more students. Of the various other media, audio-cassettes and radio have low fixed and low variable costs; good quality broadcast television has high fixed costs but zero variable costs; and pre-programmed computer-based learning and multimedia have high fixed and high variable

costs. At the time of writing, there are no convincing cost-effectiveness studies about the utilisation of technologies in which computers are a key input.

Generally the move towards online education has provided an opportunity for course designers to shift away from the preparation of prepared materials towards less structured course formats in which much of the content is developed through student dialogue. This has radical implications for course costs, and for distance education, it represents a shift away from capital in the form of learning materials back towards a more labour-intensive form of teaching, unless it is accompanied by increased learner autonomy.

Education economists expect new information and communication technologies to have an impact on the productivity of educational services, but the costs of hardware, software and consumables are linked to the price structures of the supplier country, and not to local price structures. While the largely supplier-determined cost per learning hour using a computer may be less than the cost per learning hour with a teacher in developed countries, it is more expensive than the comparable cost in countries where labour costs are low, and where as a consequence, the per hour/per pupil cost of teacher-based education is low. Even in developed countries, there are indications that the costs of online education are more expensive than other forms of distance education.

g) The Level of Student Support

all the evidence indicates that successful distance education systems require three elements: excellent teaching materials, efficient logistical systems, and responsive and where appropriate, individualised student support systems. The difficulty with this is that the cost of student support tends to be driven by the number of students in the system, so that the absolute cost of providing students' services increases rapidly with increases in student numbers. Moreover, student services are a direct student cost, so that the more one spends on this, the less likely it is that the distance education option will prove to be cheaper than traditional education.

As a direct result, the amount of face-to-face support and correspondence tuition tends to be limited. Also, every effort needs to be made to ensure that general students' services are focused on the students who need that support, and that they are provided in the most efficient manner possible, using approaches drawn from service management. A particular problem

with the costs of online education is that there is increasing evidence that it takes more time to support students studying online than it does to provide face-to-face teaching.

h) Working Practices

Working practices can affect costs significantly. Courses that take students many hours to study tend to require more materials, and the range of materials on such courses is often such that several people will be required to develop the materials. Course teams, in which overall responsibility for content and teaching strategy is vested in a team rather than the individuals, have proved to be an effective but costly approach to course design. Reducing the transaction costs of teams working by having a series of quasi-independent authors working under the direction of an academic editor will reduce costs. So too will reducing the size of the course modules so that just one or two people can produce them.

Many distance teaching systems, faced with the need to support many hundreds or thousands of students studying course materials developed by a small team of academics, have divided the academic tasks between those who develop the materials, and those who support the students learning. Further divisions of labour may occur where different individuals are appointed to mark examination scripts, and to provide general advice and educational guidance to the students. Such specialisation of tasks requires very considerable planning and management if it is to work effectively.

In the student support area, the use of telephone call centres staffed with less expensive help-desk operatives can also reduce costs. Generally, distance education has proven a fertile ground for the division of labour, and reduction in workers' autonomy. Many teachers, who see the resulting division of labour and loss of overall control as disempowering, oppose these practices. One of the reasons why many individuals have welcomed the emergence of online forms of distance education is that this is seen as once again integrating the job of the teacher, enabling him or her both to develop the Web-based materials and conduct the online class discussions. But, there is some evidence that the number of online students that can be handled by one teacher is much the same as (or even less than) the number that is handled in a face-to-face class, while the volume of messaging and the time it takes to moderate classes online have increased workloads, necessitating the employment of teaching assistants and graduate students to do some of this work.

Student support may be focused on the student in the home, but in many

cases a network of learning or study centres is maintained, where students can come together to meet each other and advisors, to use facilities such as a library and computing and audio-visual equipment, and to take part in face-to-face tutorials. Setting up and maintaining such centres can be costly, most particularly where equipment such as computers are provided at sufficient levels to enable students to access resources easily.

i) Labour Market Practices

The practices discussed above can reduce costs significantly, particularly where they are combined with the employment of staff on short-term contracts where payment is on per student, per hour, or per script basis. Many course developers, editors, producers, designers, and above all, tutors are hired on this basis. Carried to the extreme, this can result in some open and distance learning institutions having almost no core academic staff.

j) Structural Practices

Open and distance learning systems require a range of activities to be accomplished if they are to succeed, including the development, production and distribution of materials, the administration, teaching and examination of students, as well as the management of the organisation. While many institutions are organised around an integrated structure, others rely on external suppliers to fulfil some of these tasks. Thus, it is not uncommon for open and distance learning institutions to work alongside media production agencies, printers, colleges and schools, etc., to provide services and facilities. Recent proposals have suggested that services might be disaggregated even further, with individual courses being provided by a range of supplier universities, access to electronic libraries and to tuition being provided through a series of commercial operators (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2000). The globalisation of the sourcing of production and services has enabled open and distance learning institutions, in common with other enterprises, to locate production and service provision (such as help-desk facilities) in one country, to serve the delivery of teaching services to students in a number of countries. Open and distance learning institutions may also operate through partnership organisations to deliver teaching services in a range of countries.

k) Attrition and Failure Rates

There are various reasons why students drop out of their courses. Some reasons involve socio-economic factors, which are beyond the control of the university. Considerable awareness must be practised when dealing

with students and their excuses. Reasons given nowadays by our students for failure and attrition include lack of places for study in the house or neighbourhood, homes usually busy with relatives throughout the day, and sometimes, a drop in motivation due to lack of support from immediate family members. People of all ages engage in various works so as to provide food for their family. Sometimes, education is the last thing on their minds. Community attitude to education was found to be one of the social factors that can encourage or discourage the learning efforts of our students studying at a distance and on their own. Full-time students have the advantage of peer and other support services.

l) Tuition Fees and Learner Characteristics

Our students come from various backgrounds. We have already mentioned that the main factors affecting the provision of distance education to the majority of the student population who drop out of the formal system are students' ability to afford fees, their home environments, community attitude to education and other social factors. In a country of high unemployment, some communities do not regard education as a priority. They look at their children who never made it to National High School or tertiary institution levels as failures who squandered their chances. The financial burden of coping with the tuition fees may be too much for most families. Unfortunately, there are no Government-funded scholarships for distance education at the moment. Government funding for education has not improved. The annual budget allocation to the universities and other tertiary institutions has remained relatively the same for a number of years. We cannot just look at the socio-economic factors affecting our students' learning in isolation. Individual learner characteristics also impinge on their learning capabilities. Campbell (1992) points out that elements such as age, maturity, and learning styles have been identified as characteristics, which can impact the learning process of the distance learning student. Mature or aged students may have family responsibilities, which will limit the time available for study. If they are working, the only time available for study is after work. But this is also the time they may have to share with family responsibilities. Individual motivation for study and reasons why students enrolled in the first place, will determine how far a student will go even when support is not available.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The aims and objectives of Open and Distance Learning cannot be achieved where these identified factors are prevalent. ODL as a tool for

increasing access to education should liaise with conventional institutions, including Libraries, NGOs, Community leaders, and potential students to move the programme forward. We propose the following recommendations: Governments should subsidise ODL programmes and improve the electricity supply. These extension activities aim to assist or help teachers extend teaching practices in ways that include community involvement, participation and development. Countries such as Egypt could be emulated. They have a national network of distance training which uses interactive TV technology (ICT medium), and South Africa's reorientation of teachers for curriculum reform and change, titled 'English in Action', an interactive radio programme by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). These could be adopted for better education reform up to the tertiary level. Management should admit students in line with the available resources on ground. The criteria for the admission of students should be in line with the requirements for conventional institutions. The idea of ODL programmes being an avenue to generate revenue or improve IGR should be changed to the production of strong manpower for national development. The use of computers for computing results will reduce the problem of delayed results. Course materials can be delivered through radio and television broadcasts, videotape, interactive telephone, satellite, cable or Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) Lines. Many would-be distance learners have access to radio, television, and VCD/DVD. This makes these media good potential delivery systems for open and distance learning. With the combination of communication and technology tools, the delivery of distance learning may be effective. This can be ensured through the integrated involvement of all stakeholders and effective planning to ensure successful implementation of distance learning programmes. Teachers of ODL should be well-trained to improve their effectiveness and efficiency in the teaching-learning process. Students should be more focused, adopt a good maintenance culture for the available facilities, and develop good study habits. Programmes that combine conventional and distance-learning methods are strongly recommended because of its dual role of face-to-face and print learning. This could remove the societal idea that the ODL students are undeveloped professionals. ODL should not be seen as a costsaving educational measure, which can be implemented without serious planning and good implementation, but rather, it should be seen as an educational innovation that requires greater attention to planning and guided implementation for the development of the nation's required developmental manpower. The enthusiasm shown by government and steps taken so far can only be sustained with the involvement of all stakeholders (Government, business

groups, community leaders, teachers, students, conventional institutions, UNESCO, and grassroots citizens).

It is generally agreed by most academics that distance education should be promoted and supported as conventional institutions cannot cope with the demand. Without this, we are going to be getting a larger proportion of students than before, dropping out of the formal system. A cheaper way of alleviating this problem would be an investment in distance education. Koigiri (1998) supports this view. In one of his proposals for the expansion of the Department of Open and Distance Learning, he said that the establishment of more conventional universities by Governments is impossible, given the current economic climate, which is likely to continue for a long time. In any case, establishing and maintaining any institution of higher learning is an expensive exercise and even now, the existing institutions are under-funded, resulting in them being unable to expand their normal academic activities. This has been the trend for a long time and there are no indications that the situation will improve any sooner. The only option left for our Universities is to develop and offer tertiary education at the distance level to those who require it.

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