

## A SURVEY OF STUDENTS AND FACILITATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROBLEMS IN OPEN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, OYO AND KWARA STATES, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*National Open University which was formally established in Nigeria in 1983 aimed at bridging the existing gaps in education. The study is a survey research of descriptive type which unveiled the myriads of problems facing the National Open University of Nigeria as perceived by the facilitators and the students in Kwara and Oyo States. Forty facilitators and fifty students randomly selected from Kwara and Oyo States study centres participated in the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument used while simple percentage and chi-square statistics were used to analyze the research questions and the two hypotheses generated respectively. The findings of the study revealed lack of standard classrooms, inadequate supply of electricity and inadequate funding which are the variables of resource allocation and organization, as major problems facing the Open University Programme in Nigeria. However, the study revealed that there is no significant difference between facilitators' and students' perception of the problems associated with resource allocation and organization of programmes. It was therefore, recommended among others that adequate funds should be made available by the government, the institution should make course materials and computer-based media available at all study centres for students' use. Also, uninterrupted academic calendar of the university must be ensured while internet services should be provided at all study centres.*

Keywords: Open University System, Resource Allocation, Organization, Facilitators, Problems, Hindering

### INTRODUCTION

Since 1960s, the Government of Nigeria has been committed to remedying perceived deficiencies in the colonial education strategies, which focused only a few privileged people in the society. This has catalyzed socio-economic development using educational policies as a tool. The formulation of National Policy on Education in 1977 and its revision in 1981 and 2004 ushered in a compulsory education for every Nigerian child from the age of six. This was followed by series of educational programmes which were meant to increase access and quality of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

In response to the demand of many Nigerians for university education, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was established by National Open University Act 25 of 1983 under the administration of President Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The institution could not take off as a result of military intervention. It was resuscitated in 2003 sequel to President Obasanjo's fresh commitment to restart the programme. According to him, the new system would enhance the Government's effort in providing education to all Nigerians by the year 2015.

The Government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004), stated that open and distance education would benefit those who graduated from schools and desire to update their knowledge and skills, those who left schools for one reason or the other, those who did not go to school but are willing to benefit from 'Education For All Programme' and those who were not successful when they were in school but now

want to remedy their deficiencies. These are meant to provide education for all, life- long learning, adult education, self-learning, personalized learning, part-time studies and mass education which are different types of open and distance education. The Open University programme has a good vision in the provision of equal and life- long education for Nigeria, yet some problems are assumed to be posing serious challenges to the effective operation of the programme in Nigeria. This accounts for the reason why the study is out to uncover the problems as perceived by both the facilitators and students in Oyo and Kwara States, Nigeria.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There had not been opportunity for people who were on the job to pursue learning especially at the higher level. Where it existed, higher education was proliferated without thorough regulation and standard not been maintained. Also characterized such mushroom institutions are unbecoming physical and material resources while some of the manpower engaged in such institutions were not qualified. Initially, all the affiliated institutions were left alone to operate part time courses by the Federal government, until the standard was becoming intolerable. The Federal government had to explore the best alternative at her disposal as contained in the National Policy on Education, which stated 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 or Open Universities or part time and work study programme (FGN, 2004) .*

The Open University is considered as the second best to none to offer life-long education that would completely eliminate educational inequality. Osasona (1985) described Open University as the most comprehensive learning programme through which universities get their programmes acquainted to the people. This statement was corroborated by Fagbamiye (2000), when he stated that learning is made open with regards to admission, teaching media, space, time, course contents and course objectives. According to Makinde in Afolabi (2006), many people who had been deprived of higher education in Nigeria on account of geographical isolation, limited educational facilities, shift job, financial incapability, handicap and age will be able to satisfy their educational needs. This is due to the fact that open university system would eliminate all manners of constraints in acquisition of education (Alaezi, 2008).

The Government, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003) stated the objectives of the Open University as:

- a) Meeting the learning needs of all young people and adults irrespective of sex, religion or tribe through access to appropriate learning and life skills programme. Thus, Open University is designed to meet the educational needs of nomads, women and disabled.
- b) Enhancing access to quality basic and higher education. With substantial number of school age children out of school, National Open University aimed at achieving a high rate of access to higher education;
- c) Providing an alternative distance learning delivery and discouraging mushroom outreach and satellite campuses that had no regard for quality.
- d) Disseminating knowledge and information to target groups particularly with respect to government policies and activities with a view to promoting socio-political harmony, and national ethics and values;
- e) Affording learners the opportunity to study what they want, when and where they want to take place. This is meant to give those on full time occupations and employment to have control over time and space. This makes NOUN to lend itself to synchronous learning;
- f) Affording the high level academic personnel the opportunity of maximum utilization of their skills

and talents; and

- g) Providing infrastructure for the acquisition and dissemination of educational resources through information and communication technology.

Thus, Open University is a crucial strategy for expanding and improving public education system. Its learning system will allow the nation to respond effectively to the growing demand of working adults and others who have difficulty in getting training in conventional education because of lack of flexibility in the time and location. Therefore, National Open University (NOUN) which was formally established on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1983 was meant to be the fountain-head and springboard of modern day open and distance education in Nigeria.

Moreover, Kayes and Rumble (1981) described open and distance education as a system which uses various instructional media, provides access and quality education for diverse learners in a cost effective and efficient manner and assists learners to develop their full potentials. Also, Akande in Babarinde (2006) stated that distance education is a cost effective system of instruction, independent of time, location, pace and space. In spite of its numerous advantages, open and distance learning system has been identified with poor facilities, lack of qualified personnel, poor electricity supply and poor administration (Fasasi, 2004).

## METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive survey that x-rays the opinions of facilitators and students on the problems facing the operation of the Open University in Nigeria. A researchers' designed questionnaire containing 13 items on resource allocation and organization of Open University in Nigeria was used to elicit the data needed. The questionnaire was pilot tested at the Open University, Ilorin study using five facilitators and ten students who were not part of the sample for the study. The instrument was validated and using test-retest method a reliability coefficient of .76 was obtained. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select 20 facilitators and 25 students each from Oyo and Kwara States study centers, making 90 participants in all.

The following research questions were answered:

1. Is resource allocation to Open University adequate?
2. What is the facilitator and students' perception of organization of NOUN?

Also the following hypotheses were generated and tested in the study:

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between facilitators and students' perception on problems associated with resource allocation at Open University programme in Nigeria.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between facilitators and students' perception on problems associated with organization of Open University in Nigeria.

Percentage was used for analysis of the facilitators and the students' responses to research questions. For easy analysis of the research questions, Likert-four point rating scale of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were brought together while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' options were brought together. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic was employed to analyze the two hypotheses generated for the study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: Is resource allocation to Open University adequate?

Table1. Percentage Analysis of Facilitators and Students' Perception of Resource Allocation to Open University Programme in Nigeria.

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Provision of standard classroom	3(3.3%)	2(2.2%)	50(55.5 %)	35 (38.9%)
2	Provision of laboratory for practical	2 (2.2%)	0	52(57.8%)	36 (40%)
3	Adequate facilitators	20(22.2%)	35(38.9%)	28(31.1%)	17 (18.9%)
4	Adequate course materials	7 (7.8%)	23(25.6%)	40(44.4%)	20 (22.2%)
5	Available internet services at study center	0	2 (2.2%)	40(44.4%)	48 ( 53.3%)
6	Regular supply of electricity	1 (1.1%)	0	52(57.8%)	37 (41.1%)
7	Adequate funding	5 (5.6%)	20(22.2%)	31(3.3%)	34 (37.8%)
8	Qualified facilitators are engaged	39 (43.3%)	36(40%)	15(16.7%)	10(11.1%)

Table1 gives the summary of both the facilitators and the student's views on problems associated with the resource allocation for the operation of Open University in Nigeria. Respondents who agreed were 5.5% as against 94.5% who disagreed that there was provision for standard classrooms. Also, 2.2% of them agreed that laboratory was made available for practical teaching, 23.3% agreed that adequate provision was made for students' course materials, 2.2% agreed that there was provision of internet service at the study centers 1.1% agreed that there was a regular supply of electricity at the study centers. Also, 27.8% responded that there was adequate funding for the NOUN programme. On the quality of facilitators recruited by Open University, 75 respondents representing 83.3% agreed that they are of good quality. In a nutshell, the problems identified by the majority of the respondents are lack of standard classrooms, lack of Science laboratory for practical purpose, inadequate provision of course materials for the students, interrupted power supply, lack of internet service at the study centers.

Research Question 2: What is the facilitator and students' perception of organization of National Open University of Nigeria?

Table 2. Percentage Analysis of Facilitator and Students' Perception on Organization of National Open University of Nigeria.

S/n	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
1	Interaction among the students	6 (6.7%)	8 (8.9%)	46 (5.1%)	30 (33.3%)
2	School fees is very high	35 (42.2%)	45 (0.5%)	4 (4.4%)	6 (6.7%)
3	Difficult to combine domestic work, secular job with learning	46 (51.1%)	34 (37.8%)	10 (11.1%)	0
4	Non completion of the programme on time	46 (51.1%)	40 (44.4%)	3 (3.3%)	1(1.1%)
5	Non interruption of tutorial periods	12 (13.3%)	8 (8.9%)	20 (22.2%)	50 (55.5%)

Table 2 is on the facilitators and students' perception on the organization of Open University programme in Nigeria. Analysis shows that 14 representing 15% of the total respondent's agreed that interaction among the students is encouraged as against 76 (84.4%) respondents. Also, 80 respondents representing 88.9% agreed that school fees charged at the Open University is high. Similarly 80 representing 88.9% of the respondents agreed that the learners found it difficult to cope with the rigor of combining the domestic work and secular job with learning. Also, 86 representing 95.6% of the respondents agreed that the learners do not complete the programme on time. Lastly, 20 respondents (22.2%) agreed to the item, which stated that there is no interruption of tutorial hour. It can be inferred that the learning is not organized in such a way that interaction among students could be enhanced, school fees is high, there is difficulty in combining secular job with the learning and there is non- completion of the program on time.

### Hypothesis Testing

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between facilitators and students' perception on problems associated with resource allocation at National Open University programme in Nigeria.

Table 3. Chi- square Analysis of Facilitators and Students' Perception of Resource Allocation at National Open University in Nigeria.

Respondents	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Facilitators	15	10	8	7	40
Students	20	15	10	5	50
Grand Total	35	25	18	12	90

SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree

In Table 3, the calculated chi-square ( $\delta$ ) value is 1.41 while the critical  $\delta$ -value is 7.815 at  $df(r-1)(k-1)$  of 3. Comparing the two figures, the calculated value is found to be less than the table value, which implies the acceptance of the hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant difference between facilitators, and students' perceptions on the problems associated with resource allocation at the Open University in Nigeria.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between facilitators and students' perception of problems associated with organization of Open University in Nigeria.

Table 4. Chi- square Analysis of the facilitators and students perception on problems associated with the organization of Open University in Nigeria.

Respondents	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Facilitators	12	16	7	5	40
Students	10	20	8	12	50
Grand Total	22	36	15	17	90

SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree

In table 4, the calculated chi-square ( $\delta$ ) value is 3.078 while the critical  $\delta$ -value is 7.815 at  $df(r-1)(k-1)$  of 3. Comparing the two values revealed that there is no significant difference between the facilitators and learners' on the problems associated with the organization of Open University in Nigeria.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study affirmed the existing fundamental problems bewildering the operation of Open University in Nigeria. Such problems as revealed by the study are lack of standard classroom, lack of laboratory for practical exercises, inadequate facilitators, inadequate course materials, lack of internet services at study centre, irregular supply of electricity at the study centre and inadequate funding. Non-provision of the essential facilities shows a deviation from the original plan of the Government (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003).

Inadequacy of the relevant course materials for the distance-learning programme in Nigeria has been a major hindrance to the success of distance learning in Nigeria. This is contrary to the view expressed by Kegan in Babarinde (2006) that the recruited professionals are to produce adequate course materials, conduct tutorial and design the methodology for the programme.

The importance of physical resources to the success of Open University, as stressed by Akande in Babarinde (2006) has not been met. The study shows that there are no standard classrooms for proper interaction between the facilitators and the learners. This has been a great obstacle to the operation of the Open University in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

National Open University in Nigeria is faced with many challenges which could hinder the achievement of the laudable objective of the distance-learning programme. There is need for adequate attention to the problems so that the purpose of its establishment could be actualised .

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Indeed, National Open University of Nigeria has a good vision in the provision of equal and life-long education for the Nation. However, for this vision to be realized, the following recommendations are noteworthy.

Firstly, the government should ensure that qualified personnel are employed. The staff should be well remunerated and their welfare should be taken care of.

The multimedia facilities such as print, written correspondence, audio, video computer based media, telephone and television must be made available to the students at subsidized prices. This will afford them the opportunity to procure the facilities at a minimum cost.

Electricity supply must be improved in all the study centers for the success of distance learning programme in Nigeria. This will enable users of teaching and learning facilities to derive maximum benefit from them

There is a need to build modern library at every local government area in the country. This would avail the learners in the Open University the opportunity to pursue the programme without rigor.

The authority should ensure that there is no interruption in the academic calendar of the University. Therefore, adequate supervision of the programme must be put in place to ensure that the facilitators attend classes and course materials sent to the learners on time.

Learning facilities such as laboratories and classrooms should be provided in good quality at all study centers. Also, Internet services should be provided at all study centers to guarantee easy accessibility of all students to all aspects of the programme.

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