

Role of Open and Distance Learning to Human Capacity Development in Nigeria: Evidence from LAUTECH Open and Distance Learning Centre

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Abstract— The study revealed the impact of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) on human capacity development in Nigeria. Taking the case of all degree programs of the LAUTECH Open and Distance Learning Centre (LODLC), this paper examined the effectiveness of the programs towards professional competence among learners who enrolled in a degree programs of LODLC. It also assessed the level of self-esteem among learners who enrolled in a degree program of LODLC. Descriptive statistics were used as the research design, and 4,568 learners of LODLC were the population of the study. The results of the study indicated that the overall percentage of 85% of respondents had built professional competencies through the ODL programs in comparison, 82% of the respondents were satisfied and proud to be studying via ODL mode. It can be concluded that ODL has contributed immensely to human capacity development of the learners who enrolled for degree programs through its flexibility of the facilitation and teaching system adopted by LODLC, the convenience of teaching time and low charges have continued to attract a lot of learners and most of the learners look forward to a better future in life. Therefore, it is recommended that all working-class persons should leverage on ODL programs as a means to upgrade their professional competencies for the benefit and growth of their careers and the society should rest assured of the high credibility of regulated and well developed ODL system as an avenue for the development of human capacity and to take advantage of ODL programs.

Keywords— Open and Distance learning; Human capability development, and Learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is well recognized that education is an instrument of social and economic transformation. The Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, as an alternative way of delivering education, has gained much prominence all over the world. In terms of widening access to learning, the system has made remarkable progress especially in the field of higher education. It is incontestable that the ODL system has continued to open up access to education for millions of people, especially in Africa and elsewhere who otherwise would not have had the opportunity particularly those who could not gain access to university education in the conventional system due to varied reasons of socio-economic and geographical factors particularly. Also, the benefits for learners of moving to online provision are ostensibly multiple. Learning can be engaged both synchronously and asynchronously, offering flexibility for those who cannot

attend the traditional face-to-face session due to work commitments, caring responsibilities or disability. The emergence of ODL has marked a turning point in the provision of educational opportunities across the globe. According to UNESCO, (2012), ODL is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of internet-based information and technologies.

Despite the ODL success story, the concern being expressed among leaders and experts in ODL is that of quality of output (Daniels, 2012). Most ODL institutions in their bid to achieve mega status tend to focus mainly on access (quantity) and in the process, the issue of quality of output/human capacity development, which is critical, is being relegated to the background. Daniels (2012) echoed this concern in his opening speech at the 6th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in India.

The existence of a large pool of human population does not automatically translate to a productive resource. Human beings become productive resources only when they can contribute meaningfully to productive economic activities. As argued by Omolewa (2016), size should not be a driving force in ODL. What is important according to him is to ensure that education can adequately prepare learners for the demands of the global learning society of the twenty-first century. Thus, providing access alone cannot be considered a real contribution unless it translates into success. Success, as used in this context, is not just completing a certifiable study programme but completion of a study programme that results into the enhancement of human wellbeing, upgrading of competencies and skills that enable the learners to use their new skills and knowledge for the development of themselves professionally and their communities. Daniels (2012) has charged ODL practitioners to judge their efforts not only by enrolment figures but also by the success of their learners. Floyd (2014) argues that ODL can meet the quality challenge and can do so in ways that produce the highest quality outcomes than are easily achieved by other methodologies. The key is to balance access with quality.

Any effort to increase human knowledge, enhance skills and productivity and stimulate resourcefulness of individuals is an effort in human development. According to Akingbade

(2017), human capacity development is the human capacity and productivity engendered through knowledge and skills acquired from education, training, and experience; and facilitated by an enabling environment. It is the intangible factor of the production process that contributes to human intellect, skills, and competencies in the production and provision of goods and services. Human capacity development is about supporting and investing in people, using a variety of means, including education, training, coaching, mentoring, internships, capacity building programs, organizational development, and human resource management. According to Adamu (2012), human capital formation transcends mere acquisition of intellectual ability through the formal education system towards the transformation of the total man to enhance his productivity. He argued that human capital investment is an indispensable component of the development process and a force that can help in tackling inequalities and poverty in any nation.

Anuwar Ali (2015) notes that the role of universities in human capital development can be seen in two ways; first, to supply the skills for national economies; and secondly, on the demand side, to increase the drive within the national population for a process of “up-skilling” by opening doors to greater access in higher education. ODL has been and continues to be a viable way through which professionals may enhance their professional competencies while continuing to work, thus earning a living while learning (Braithwaite, 2010). Therefore, ODL is seen as enabling human capacity development.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the years, ODL tertiary institutions, particularly in developing countries, have faced several challenges. According to Braithwaite (2014), the most contentious of these challenges has been the poor public perception of the quality of ODL programs. A common perception is that distance learning is not as effective as traditional (face-to-face) education (Adeoye and Salawu, 2012). Consequently, the acceptability of ODL certificates by the labour market is affected because of fear of quality compromise. Although public perception may be uninformed and misguided, it is capable of distorting the intended gains of distance learning. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address the challenge, otherwise ODL will continue to be viewed as an inferior alternative, good enough for failures and one that only produces mediocre graduates (Mboya, 2013). However, there is a dearth of research on ODL and human capacity development. Thus, this study intends to fill the gap with a focus on learners of the LAUTECH Open and Distance Learning Centre (LODLC), Ogbomoso, Oyo State of Nigeria.

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to assess the involvement of ODL to human capacity development in Nigeria and to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the ODL programs towards building professional competence among learners who enrolled in a degree programme of LODLC

2. Assess the level of self-esteem among learners who enrolled in degree programs of LODLC

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the report will examine and review the literature on the definitions of ODL, concepts of ODL, characteristics, ambiguities of ODL. The general impression that has been observed is that many academicians in the conventional system of education appear to lack information on the meaning, usefulness, quality, and models of ODL system. It is, therefore, imperative to start our discussions on this note with the meaning, characteristics, and models of the ODL.

Definitions of Open and Distance Learning

There is no universally accepted definition of the term open learning. Some educationists argue that ‘open’ simply means open entry and access to learning opportunities and the removal of barriers to learning opportunities. Others argue that open learning can be substituted for flexible learning.

Jegede, (2016) looks at open learning as “any form of learning in which the provider enables individual learners to exercise choice over any one or more of several aspects of learning”. Most definitions of distance education appear to portray the possibility of communication between participants in a learning system across time and space through technologies. Ojewumi & Olasupo (2013) explain distance education as “an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learners”. On the same view, Oladipo (2010) defines distance education as “the various forms of teaching and learning at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their learners in lecture rooms”. A combination of the two terms appears to have given rise to the currently operating term, ODL. Arulogun and Gbadegesin (2015), pointed out that ODL is strongly dependent on well designed and developed course materials as the course materials take on more of the roles of the teacher as knowledge facilitator and disseminator.

Open and distance learning is characterized by the following societal expectations, among others (Jimoh, 2013):

1. Making education less expensive
2. Enabling more people take part in cultural and social life
3. Relieving the overcrowded traditional universities
4. Enabling more people to study while working
5. Encouraging lifelong learning
6. Making people gain more qualifications and skill proficiencies to enable them survive in today’s changing employment space
7. Opening up access to university education for students with required admission requirements

Distinguishing Features of Open and Distance Learning

The basic distinguishing feature of an Open and Distance Learning institution and its academic programs can be summarized as follows: Apart from flexibility, easy access, and cost-effectiveness, Open and Distance Learning programs are learner-centered. They differ from those of the

conventional university system where both instructional activities and course materials are lecturer-centered. It follows that academic programs in an ODL institution seek to satisfy the needs of learners, not the other way round. The beneficial purposes of needs assessment in ODL programs can be appreciated.

V. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive analysis was adopted. The descriptive method was used to ascertain the current status of the level of professional development among the learners who enrolled in the LODLC degree programs. The study was conducted in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The population of the study involved all the learners pursuing a degree programme in LODLC across all the departments. LODLC’s data records showed a total of 4,568 learners enrolled in a degree programme across four departments (Nursing, Accounting,

Marketing, and Computer Science) operating in LODLC as of the 2020/2021 academic session. 300 samples consisting of learners in LODLC were randomly selected from the four departments i.e. computer science, marketing, accounting, and nursing with age ranges between 20 – 50 years.

Data Analysis

Questionnaires used to collect data from the study samples on the effectiveness of ODL towards human capacity development considering services render by LODLC and its other benefits to the learners were analyzed to confirm the effectiveness of ODL programs in building human capacity professionally. The responses under each section of the questionnaire were analyzed based on percentage and the responses having the maximum frequency were arranged in descending order. The following findings were recorded as follows:

TABLE 1: Effectiveness of ODL Programs towards Building Professional Competence among Learners Who Enrolled in a Degree Programme of LODLC

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Online facilitation is effective	170	90	30	10	300	1.60	.801
Percentage (%)	56.7%	30%	10%	3.3%	100%		
Learner support service had been helpful	150	110	31	9	300	1.66	.782
Percentage (%)	50%	36.7%	10.3%	3%	100%		
Online registrations are easy	183	101	14	2	300	1.45	.618
Percentage (%)	61%	33.7%	4.7%	0.7%	100%		
LMS is very easy to access	169	84	38	9	300	1.62	.819
Percentage (%)	56.3%	28%	12.7%	3%	100%		
My courses are so relevant to my Job	181	89	20	10	300	1.53	.764
Percentage (%)	60.3%	29.7%	6.7%	3.3%	100%		
Facilitators in charge of my courses are knowledgeable	176	70	40	14	300	1.64	.883
Percentage (%)	58.7%	23.3%	13.3%	4.7%	100%		
The assignment and quizzes are relevant to my programme courses materials	142	86	50	22	300	1.84	.954
Percentage (%)	47.3%	28.7%	16.7%	7.3%	100%		
Clinicals training/SIWES organized by the centre are very good and effective	163	94	25	15	300	1.66	.868
Percentage (%)	54.3%	31.3%	8.3%	6%	100%		
The mode of examination in the centre are measure to the standard	182	79	30	9	300	1.55	.793
Percentage (%)	60.7%	26.3%	10%	3%	100%		
Satisfied with the professional skilled gained in this mode of learning	198	58	43	11	300	1.49	.747
Percentage (%)	66%	19.3%	14.3%	0.3%	100%		
Tutors always give constructive feedback	123	114	40	13	300	1.88	.915
Percentage (%)	41%	38%	13.3%	7.7%	100%		
I find the helpdesk center useful if I want clarification on issues	120	132	38	10	300	1.79	.787
Percentage (%)	40%	44%	12.7%	3.3%	100%		
Overall Percentage	54%	31%	11%	4%	100%		

Figure 1 shows the response of respondents on whether online facilitation is effective or not effective. The result shows that 56.67% of respondents strongly agreed that online facilitation is effective, 30% of the respondents agreed that online facilitation is effective while 10% and 3.33% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that online facilitation is effective.

Figure 2 shows the response of respondents on whether learner support had been helpful to the learners of open and distance learning centre. The result revealed that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that the learner support service

had been helpful, 36.67% of respondents agreed that the learner support service had been helpful while 10.33% and 3% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that the learner support had been helpful to the learners of open and distance learning centre.

Figure 3 shows the response of the respondents on how easy is the online registration of ODL programs. The results revealed that 61% of respondents strongly agreed that online registration of ODL programs was so easy, 33.67% of the respondents agreed that online registration of ODL programs was easy while 4.67% and 0.67% of the respondents disagreed

and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that online registration of ODL programs was very easy.

Looking at the table, table 1 shows the main reasons why some of the respondents registered for a degree programme in LODLC. The result shows that 86.7% of respondents thought that online facilitation is effective while 13.3% were not satisfied with the effectiveness of the ODL programs. The result also revealed that about 86.75% of the respondents found the service of learner support helpful while 13% of respondents were not satisfied with the service of the learner support. Also, 94.7% of respondents found it easy and convenient to register for their courses online while about 5.4% of respondents did not find it easy to register for their courses online. 84.3% of respondents have easy access to the Learning Management System (LMS) being used by the centre while 15.7% of respondents could not find easy access to LMS. About 90% of respondents agreed that courses offered are so relevant to their Job while 10% of respondents said otherwise. 76% of respondents said that assignments and quizzes given to them during the study are relevant to the programme course materials. The result showed 85.6% of respondents said that the clinical training/SWIS organized by the centre is very good and effective.

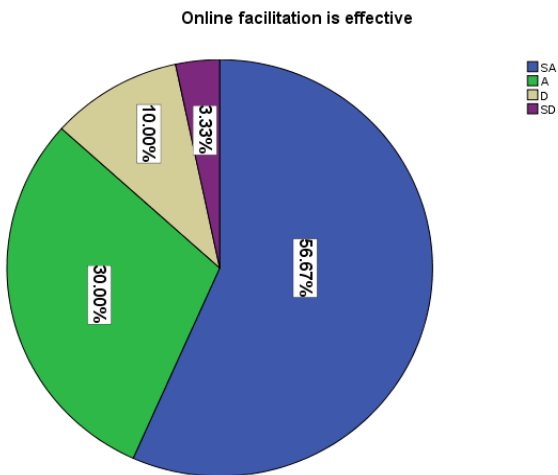


Fig. 1: Response of respondents on whether online facilitation is effective
Source: Researcher's Concept

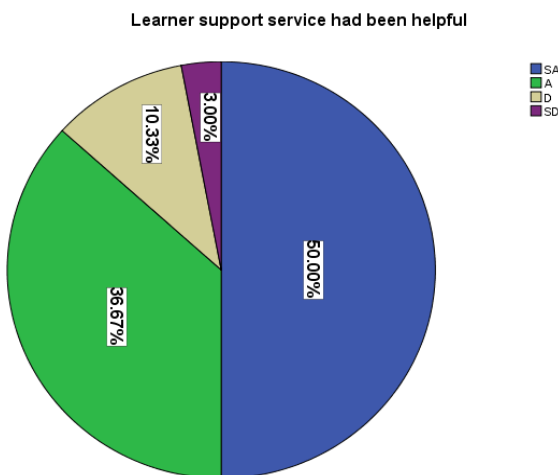


Fig. 2: Response of the respondents on whether learner support had been helpful
Source: Researcher's Concept

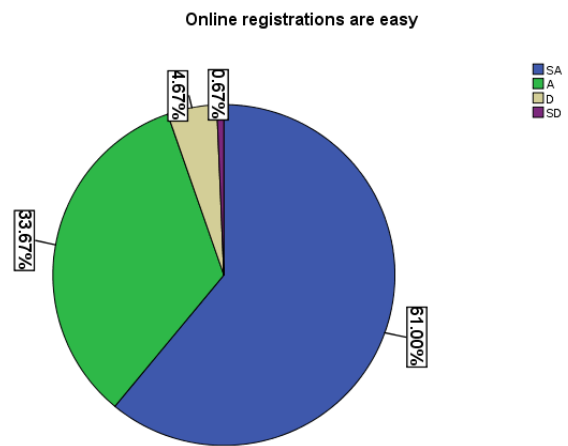


Fig. 3: Response of respondents on online registrations of ODL programs
Source: Researcher's Concept

TABLE 2: Assessing the level of self-esteem among learners who enrolled in a degree programme of LODLC

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
Happy with my choice of learning	145	100	40	15	300	1.75	.870
Percentage (%)	48.3%	33.3%	13.3%	5%	100%		
I will recommend this mode of learning to others	80	180	25	15	300	1.92	.738
Percentage (%)	26.7%	60%	8.3%	5%	100%		
I am proud to be an ODL student	171	85	40	4	300	1.59	.768
Percentage (%)	56.7%	28.7%	13.3%	1.3%	100%		
Satisfied with LODLC policy	155	91	40	14	300	1.71	.869
Percentage (%)	51.7%	30.3%	13.3%	4.7%	100%		
Interested in continue my higher degree with ODL mode	149	98	41	12	300	1.72	.847
Percentage (%)	49.7%	32.7%	13.7%	4%	100%		
There is reasonable fee structure for the ODL programme	176	62	40	22	300	1.69	.960
Percentage (%)	58.7%	20.7%	13.3%	7.3%	100%		
Online facilitations give valuable information needed	160	70	40	30	300	1.80	1.015
Percentage (%)	53.3%	23.3%	13.3%	10%	100%		
Online facilitation is prefer to traditional contact sessions	168	79	40	13	300	1.66	.869
Percentage (%)	56%	26.3%	13.3%	4.3%	100%		
Overall Percentage (%)	50%	32%	13%	5%	100%		

The result equally revealed that about 85.3% of respondents were satisfied with the professional skilled gained in ODL mode of learning while about 17.7% of respondents were not too satisfied. It is evident from Table 1 that the level of effectiveness of ODL programs towards building professional competence among learners enrolled in a degree programme of LODLC appeared very high as indicated by the overall percentage of about 85% of respondents who had achieved greatly through the ODL programs.

Figure 5 shows the response of respondents on whether they recommend ODL mode of learning to others. The result revealed that 26.67% of the respondents strongly agreed that ODL mode of learning had been recommended to others by them, 60% of the respondents agreed that ODL mode of learning had been recommended to others by them while 8.33% and 5% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that respondents had been recommended ODL mode of learning to others.

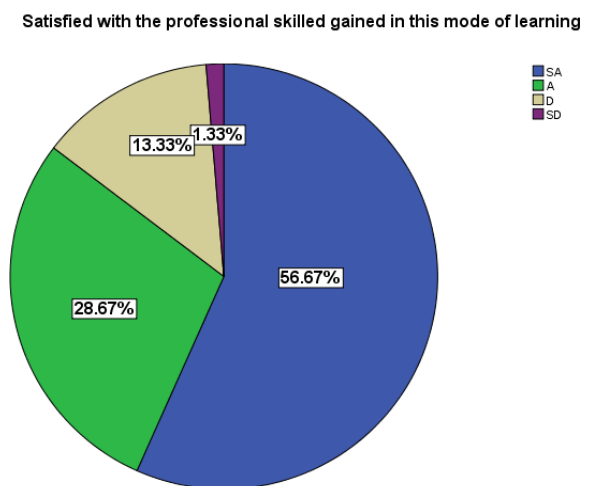
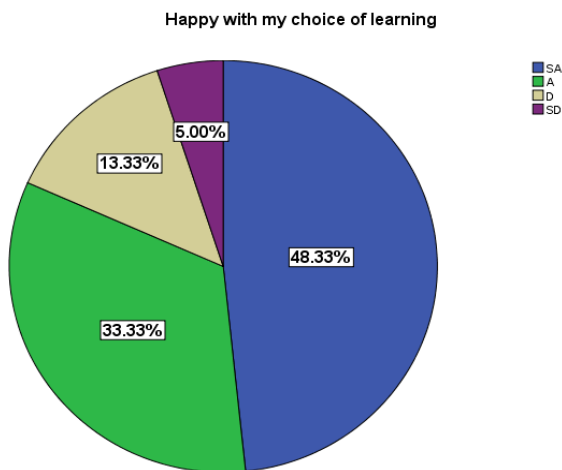


Fig. 4: Response of the respondents about been happy with their choice of learning
Source: Researcher's Concept

Fig. 6: Response of respondents on the satisfaction of the skill gained in ODL
Source: Researcher's Concept

Figure 4 shows the response of the respondents about been happy with their choice of learning. The result revealed that 48.33% of the respondents strongly agreed that the choice of their learning made them happy, 33.33% of the respondents agreed that the choice of their learning made them happy while 13.33% and 5% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that respondents had been have with their choice of learning.

Figure 6 shows the response of the respondents on the satisfaction of the skill gained in ODL. The result reveal that 56.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the professional skills gained in ODL mode of learning, 28.67% of the respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the professional skills gained in ODL mode of learning while 13.33% and 1.33% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. This implies that the respondents were satisfied with the professional skills gained in the ODL mode of learning.

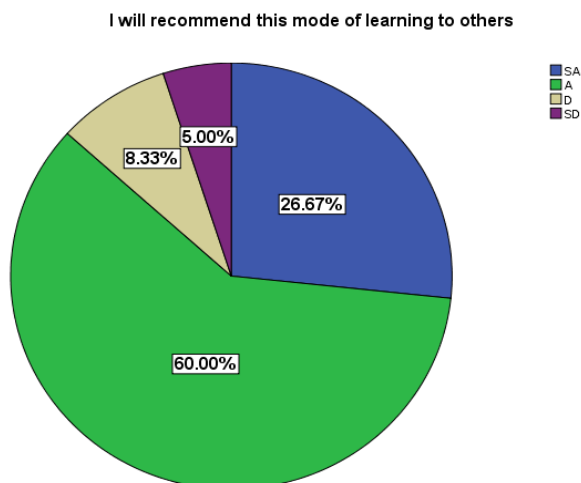


Fig. 5: Response of the respondents on whether they recommend ODL mode of learning to others
Source: Researcher's Concept

Looking at the table, table 2 shows the level of self-esteem among learners who enrolled for a degree programme in LODLC. The result shows that 81.6% of respondents were happy with their choice of learning while 18.3% were not happy with their choice of learning. About 86.7 of the respondents said that they will recommend this mode of learning to others while about 13.3% said otherwise. Also, 85.4% of the respondents were proud to be an ODL student while 14.6% were not too comfortable to be an ODL student. About 82% of respondents said they are satisfied with the LODLC policy while 18% of respondents dissatisfied with the policy of ODL. It is evident from Table that the level of self-esteem among learners who enrolled in a degree programme of LODLC appeared very high as indicated by the overall percentage of 82% of respondents who were satisfied and proud to be an ODL student.

VI. CONCLUSION

Following the analysis and discussion of results in this study, it can be concluded that ODL has contributed immensely to human capacity development of the learners who enrolled for a degree programme. Through the flexibility of the facilitation, learner support system and teaching system adopted by LODLC, the convenience of teaching time and low charges has continued to attract a lot of learners and most of the learners look forward to a better future in life. Arising from the study, the public should be rest assured of the credibility of distance education as avenue to develop human capacity and take advantage of ODL programs. This will ensure that greater number of citizens have expanded access to quality higher education.

Recommendation

To explore all the benefits of ODL towards building human capacity development, the following recommendations are being suggested:

1. ODL programs should be recommended to all employed persons as a means to upgrade their professional competencies for the benefit and growth of the nation economic developments.
2. Efforts should be made to assess the programs regularly by educational regulators to ensure continuous effectiveness and efficiency.
3. More awareness needs to be done in terms of bringing to light the intended purpose, and understanding of the nature of the ODL especially to people who are not inclined to this mode of education.

Furthermore, as more and more people adopt ODL as a means of achieving higher education, it is believed that the literacy base of the country will advance and the skill capacity of the citizens will be boosted. This will consequently bring about an increase in equity and equality in terms of employment levels and boost socio-economic development in the country and beyond.

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