

Chapter 5

Merits and Worth of National Open University of Nigeria as Distance Education Intervention

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ABSTRACT

This chapter employed Program Theory-Based Evaluation Design and Summative Evaluation Model to evaluate the merits and worth of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) from 2003 to 2013 as a distance education intervention. A sample of 902 was drawn from students of and staff of NOUN, National Universities Commission and conventional Federal Universities in Nigeria. Construct validated Program Theory-based Evaluation Questionnaire with reliability coefficient of 0.79 was used. Ten hypotheses were tested using ANOVA and independent samples t-test at 0.05 alpha. Results indicated that great discrepancy exists between the expected and actual outcomes of NOUN as it is significantly inadequate in addressing 'higher education for all in need' intervention for which it was established. Though the objectives for which NOUN was established has been partially implemented as defined and aspects of its objectives achieved. The study recommends that the defected aspects of NOUN should be modified to meet stated objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Education could rightly be seen as the most important instrument for positive change in the society and should therefore be accorded due attention

for the society to make appreciable scientific, technological and all-round advancement. Nigeria seems to have perceived education in this light and embarked on educational revolution by formulating the National Policy on Education (Federal

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Republic of Nigeria, 1999; 2004). Educational revolution is used here to mean massive radical reformation of the educational sector in which a 'state of emergency' was declared for the sector nationally that brought about dramatic change for the better over a specified period of time (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2002).

In bringing the desired and meaningful changes in the Nigerian society through educational revolution, Nigerian government adopted among other things, policies which would ensure equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels of life-long learning. At any stage of the educational process after primary education, an individual will be able to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with studies, or embarking on fulltime employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on. That is, the education system in the nation was structured to develop the practice of self-learning through National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) mainly with the vision of guaranteeing "higher education for all in need" (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2013b).

The 2004 National Policy on Education gave rise to Open University system as a distinct learning institution. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) emphasized explicitly that maximum efforts shall be made by the Government to enable all citizens who truly desire to acquire higher education to be actually provided access to higher education to meet their ambition. The access could be through conventional university or via open university education, correspondence courses, or part-time programmes. The Policy specified a much broader system of higher education that education for all, life-long education or education for life as well as mass education, media-based education, adult and non-formal education.

Theses variants of education that contribute to equal and adequate educational opportunities for all across levels other than the conventional university system have collectively been described

as open and distance education (UNESCO, 2002; 2003; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This is more so because the variants neither exclude certain categories of persons nor restrict access to education to just the privileged few who could afford the conventional education system.

Specifically, open and distance education also referred to as distance learning or D-Learning or simply ODL is a mode of delivering education and instruction, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom (Ololube, Ubogu, & Egbezor, 2007). Distance learning provides access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both (Ifinedo & Ololube 2007).

UNESCO (2002) sees distance education as an educational process in which most or all of the teaching-learning interaction is accomplished with use of electronic or print artificial medium by teachers who are removed in space and time from the learners. This view implies that distance education has been in operation in Nigeria from the 1880s when some Nigerians studied independently and wrote University of London examination by correspondence (Omolewa, 1982). Example of Nigerians who obtained university degrees through distance learning or as external students include Alvan Ikoku, Eyo Ita, Banjo S. A., Adeyemo M. A., Odunsi A. T. O., Ademolekun N. K., and Ogunlesi J. S. (Aderinoye and Ojokheta, 2004). The writing of University of London examination as external students in Nigeria continued till 1949 when University College, Ibadan started conducting extramural classes in Nigeria on behalf of Oxford University. Over time, distance education in Nigeria eventually crystallized into the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) with the aid of the National Policy on Education (NPE) that served as the legal document (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Provision of equal education to all Nigerians at the various levels of education is a core objective of the National Policy on Education. This

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