

Higher Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria: The Quality Perspective.

Summary of the Lecture

The issue of training high level manpower for sustainable development has increased tremendously the demand for Higher Education globally and especially in developing countries like Nigeria. The idea of expanding admission quota and traditional universities by a factor of ten as a means of ensuring equity in Higher Education is simply not tenable in Nigeria because of poor infrastructure, inadequate personnel and funding. The only viable option is the introduction of Distance Education.

Distance Education institutions have been helping enormously in absorbing what conventional universities could not take through their programmes. It gives unimaginable number of people access to higher education all over the world, thereby ensuring that equity and fundamental right to higher education is maintained globally. This innovative method and its wide-ranging accessibility now compel traditional universities to transform from single to dual mode universities. To wit, Nigerian higher institutions now engage in Distance Education as a response to the critical educational problem of number, infrastructure, personnel and quality. Moreso, they engaged in this as a credible means of enhancing their IGR. DE facilitates massive manpower development and training, continual skill upgrading and retraining. It provides the workers the opportunity to work and study at the same time, enabling them to upgrade their skill without being taken away from their work places. Again, the economies of scale offered in DE make it possible for more people to be trained at lower cost. DE promotes flexible and self-directed learning. Here, learning is self-paced and this generates initiative and creativity in the learner. It is pertinent to state that people who actively engage in self-directed learning, learn more and better than those who wait to be taught.

The introduction of ICT has revolutionized instruction massively and has equally opened up many and varied learning paths for learners in a bid to increase access. Nevertheless, in spite of the current boost in access and interest, DE programmes seem to have a low image in Nigeria due to quality issues raised by critics. For example, Nigeria higher distance education institutions have been accused of paying more attention to the issue of access to the detriment of quality because there seems to be no clear and comprehensive national distance education policy and institutional quality assurance policy in Nigeria higher distance education.

However, quality and image problem of DE in Nigeria can be tackled through comprehensive and credible Quality Assurance strategies, which include:

- Ensuring the use of experts in the development and writing of course materials.
- Course development approach must ensure the production of rich and qualitative materials.
- Regular evaluation of course contents to sustain relevance and maintain quality.
- Staff development programme must be put in place.
- Establishment of separate distance education commission and National Policy for purposes of legitimacy, standardization and acceptance.
- Regular evaluation of learners and provision of immediate feedback.
- Provision of tutor-student and student-student interactions at regular intervals.
- Recruitment of regular staff by DE institutions.
- Adequate funding of DE institution.

The researchers conducted by the lecturer on DE institutions in Nigeria indicate that the perception of DE in Nigeria as a poor counterfeit of the traditional higher institutions is erroneous. Evidences of quality performance can be glanced here and there, but since quality is incremental, there is need to continuously implement the above strategies, in order to improve the quality and eliminate the low image of DE programmes in the country.

Higher Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria: The Quality Perspective.

Protocols

The Vice-Chancellor,
The Deputy Vice-Chancellors,
Members of the Governing Council here present,
Principal Officers of the University here present,
Deans and Directors of Faculty and Institute here present,
Distinguished Past Inaugural Lecturers,
Distinguished Professors,
Heads of Academic and Administrative Department,
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
Distinguished Guests,
Distinguished Lecturers and Astute Administrators,
Other Staff of the University,
Members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm,
Great Lions and Lionesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by appreciating God, the Vice-Chancellor and everyone here present at this 114th inaugural lecture. It gives me immense joy to stand in the presence of this crème of the society, who left all their engagements, to make themselves available for this occasion. I thank you greatly for finding time to attend this lecture. Mr Vice Chancellor Sir, I deem it worthy at the prime of this lecture, to appreciate the entire members of the Faculty of Education of this great University for finding me worthy to present this inaugural lecture as the serving Dean of the Faculty of Education. You all have a pride of place in my heart and I promise to serve you with utmost diligence and humility.

My Journey in the University

This is a special point in the life of every professor. It is a period when a professor takes stock of all he/she has done, and charts a course for the future. Having spent not less than 22 years in this citadel of learning, it is pertinent that I take you through my journey in this great university up to

this point of my inaugural lecture. Furthermore, tracing the history of my career will help me put my lecture in perspective.

Contrary to my wish to become a banker due to my knowledge and exposure in Economics, the wise counsel of my husband constrained me to embrace the teaching profession. Today, I have no regrets because his wisdom sharpened my focus in life and this has paid-off immensely.

I joined the services of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1994 as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies following the advice of Venerable C.A. Onyechi who talked me into applying to the Department. I was skeptical initially since I did not study Adult Education. However, with the inter-disciplinary nature of adult education and my background in economics, the Department found me worthy to be recruited. When I got into this department, my first challenge was to choose an area that will be in line with my previous academic experience. I eventually found Extension and Distance Education as the most relevant and viable field of study for me. Today, I find myself at the apex of my profession and in the presence of a multifaceted and respected audience to present my inaugural lecture in this chosen field of study.

It will interest you Mr. Vice-Chancellor to know that as soon as I got into the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies and into the field of Extension and Distance Education, my perspective on education delivery changed. My initial perspective was that education should be restricted to the four walls of an institution for quality. Currently, my perspective on education hinges on ‘liberation and massification of education’. Education should be granted the freedom it deserves to penetrate all the nooks and crannies of our society, in order to restore the dignity of man. With this, I became an advocate of unlimited and widened access to education for the development of innate and latent potentials. My interest in widening access to education is based on my conception of education as a lifelong process. Lifelong learning, I believe helps to keep one abreast of time and happenings in one’s environment and the world. Education starts from the cradle and ends in the grave. Therefore, at all points in time, education must be granted the liberation and freedom it deserves.

The liberation and massification of Higher Education in Nigeria has implication for quality. Distance Education in Nigeria and the world over has been seriously indicted by critics on grounds of quality. This was the basis for the initial closure of the National Open University of Nigeria in 1984. Today, quality continues to be the greatest challenge that distance education programmes face. There is then need to assure quality in distance education programmes, and this is where I think that I have made appreciable contribution to the discipline. Hence, the focus of my lecture ‘Higher Distance Education in Nigeria: The Quality Perspective’.

Introduction

Nigeria as the most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa has a population of 140 million people (NPC 2007) and 274 ethnic groups inhabiting a land mass of about 923, 768 square kilometers. Providing quality education to this teeming population within the current reality of dwindling financial resources is a herculean task. The continuous growth in population and its attendant increase in demand for higher education have made the conventional mode of education inadequate to satisfy the yearning for higher education by the populace. Herasim, Hiltz, Teles and Turoff (1995) have currently observed that the traditional method of teaching can no longer satisfy the learning needs due to the following reasons:

1. High quality learning depends, to a large extent, on finding a sufficient number of suitable educators.
2. Studies in public research Universities are expensive; thus accessibility is usually limited and subject to budget cuts and restrictions.
3. Traditional learning is limited to a particular place (classroom on campus), a specific time and a uniform pace.

Furthermore, the need to provide education for all and sundry, irrespective of location and time, has made it necessary that Nigeria must seek for alternative means to deliver education to the citizens in order to meet its increasing demand. The above situation led to a search for a more, viable, reliable, comprehensive, cost efficient and cost effective system of education, which Jegede (2003) notes is possible through distance education method.

Distance education in Nigeria started in form of correspondence study in British Universities. With the establishment of the first generation indigenous universities, Extra Mural Units of the Universities took charge of outreach and distance education programmes. The establishment of

the second and third generation universities to contain the massive demand for higher education and the inability of these universities to satisfy this demand for higher education, saw many universities establishing distance education programmes alongside conventional programmes. Between 1992 and 2007, Nigeria witnessed the proliferation of satellite campuses for distance education all over the federation. Many Universities in Nigeria ran part-time distance education programmes in major cities through their consultancy service units or liaison offices as means of generating internal revenue. Many of these programmes were found to be sub-standard in quality as unqualified lecturers and poor accommodation were utilized. The poor quality of the programmes prompted the National Universities Commission (NUC) to conduct a verification exercise in which 52 campuses were identified to be highly sub-standard. In 2002, the Federal Government closed down all the Satellite campuses and issued new guidelines for the establishment of such campuses. To ameliorate the effect of the closure on access to education, President Olusegun Obasanjo resuscitated the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) on 1ST October, 2002 as a single mode distance education university.

Notwithstanding the re-establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria and the commencement of distance education and e-learning programmes by conventional universities, the quality of the programmes and the graduates still generate debate among educators. Distance education programmes in Nigeria, as elsewhere, has low image and is viewed to be less prestigious than conventional programmes, to the extent that its certificates are discriminated against in the labour market. This may be attributed to low understanding of this innovative approach to education by the populace, explosion in its student admission rate, allocation of limited resources to distance education institutions and lack of faith in the assessment procedures. This issue of quality, which is of great concern to the generality of Nigerians, has also been of great research interest to me. It is, therefore, important that this inaugural lecture discusses this issue of quality in Nigeria higher distance education programmes to help clarify the misgivings against the programmes and the products of the programmes.

Early and Contemporary Perceptions of Distance Education (DE)

Distance Education (DE) is an evolving field of study in Nigeria. It has provided an unquantifiable and considerable access to education for the teeming populations, which are unable to access conventional schooling. Holmberg (1989) writes that distance education

emerged as a form of instruction at least 150 years ago from correspondence study. It has been variously denoted as correspondence study, home study, off campus study, open education, external study, etc. The first generation of Distance Education was known as correspondence education and was based extensively on written and printed materials. These written materials were sent to students through mail delivery system. The second generation of Distance Education also made use of printed materials and electronic media like the radio and television. According to Holmberg, this phase came into existence after the establishment of Open University of UK in 1969. The use of radio and instructional television ushered in a period of high expectation in the quality of instructional delivery of higher education programmes. Despite the enthusiasm that instructional radio and television generated, users found some flaws. These include the preclusion of synchronous instruction and interaction between teacher and students, and sometimes, radio and television could be a source of distraction to instruction. The third generation Distance Education is based on extensive integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the basis for two-way interactivity in the instructional process. The ICT base of Distance Education has extensively massified education, bringing education to the doorsteps of clients. This ultimately has expanded access to education.

Distance Education has been variously defined by distance educators and Distance Education institutions. California Distance Learning Project (CDLP) (2013) defines Distance Education as “any educational or learning process or system in which the teacher and instructor are separated geographically or in time from his or her students; or in which students are separated from other students or educational resources”. Ike and Iwu (2001) view Distance Education as the provision of education by mode other than conventional face-to-face method, but whose goals are similar to and just as noble and practical as those of on-campus, full time, face-to-face education. The Council of Regional Accrediting Commission (CRAC) (2001) sees Distance Education as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place and instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Distance Education is, therefore, an educational process whereby students and teachers are separated most of the time during the instructional process. However, with the integration of educational media resources the gap in space and time are bridged for effective instruction. Key features that emanate from the above definitions are:

1. Separation of the teacher from the students in space and time.
 2. The use of educational media resources to bridge the gap of separation in time and space.
 3. The adoption of minimal face-to-face contact while separation takes the greatest part of the instructional process.
 4. Individualization of learning through student-paced rather than teacher-paced learning.
 5. The integration of student support services to buffer the impact of the media resources.
 6. The provision of real time communication and immediate feed-back between the teachers and the learners.
 7. Sharing of learning experiences between teachers and learners and among learners.
- Distance Education is geared towards widening access to education for the teeming population who require this to develop their latent potentials and contribute to the development of their nations.

Relevance and Justification of Distance Education in the Delivery of Higher Education in Nigeria

Distance education is justified on the following grounds;

Access to Higher Education

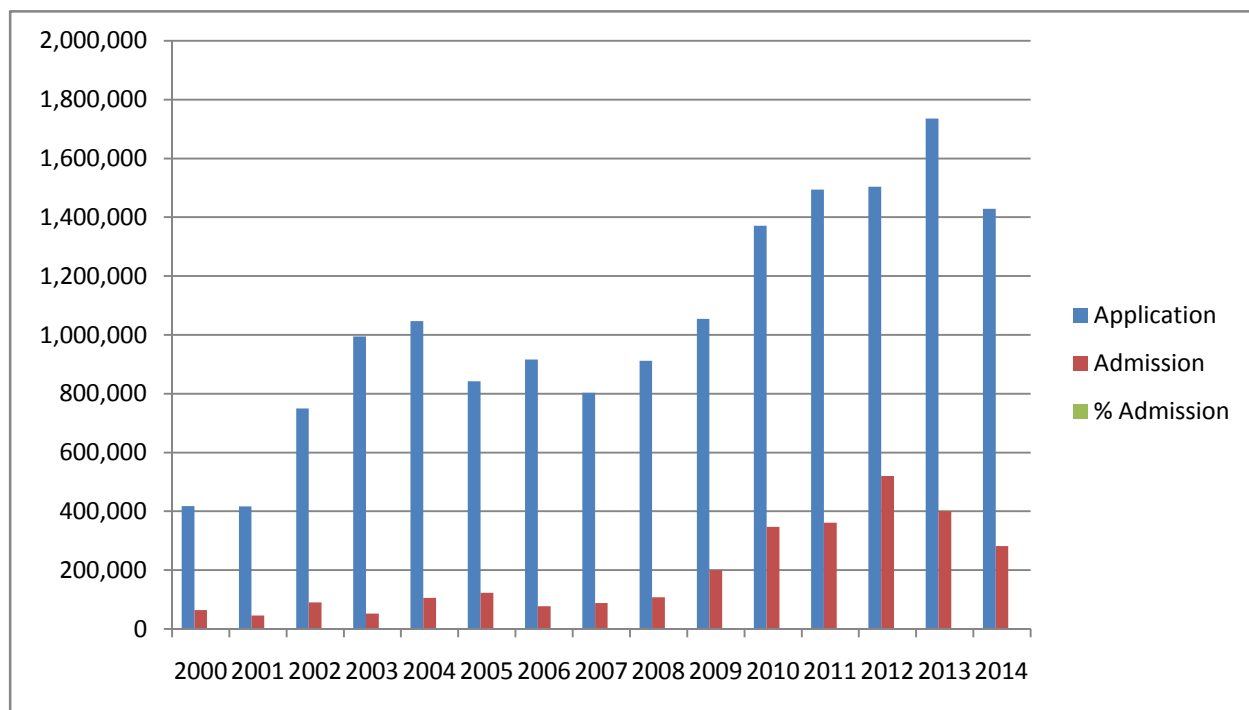
In 1959 as Nigeria prepared for independence, the government set up the Ashby Commission to investigate Nigeria's need in the field of post-school certificate and higher education. The recommendations of the commission guided a lot of decisions in the educational sector in the years that followed. Detailed as the Ashby Commission Report was, it was not realistic about the zeal for higher education in Nigeria. In 1960, for example, Ashby recommended four Universities for Nigeria and projected a total students' population of 7,500 by 1970 (10 years

after independence), and 10,000 by 1980 (20 years after independence). By the middle of the 1970s, however, the total number of Federal Universities had increased to 13. By 1999, the Federal Universities had a total of 400,000 students. Every year, the demand for places in the Universities remained unmet. Nigerian Universities have not been able to absorb up to 30% of the total number of qualified applicants. This can be seen from the table and chart below:

Application and Admission Figures into Nigerian Universities:

Year	Application	Admission	% Admission
2000	418,292	64,368	15.35
2001	416,318	45,766	11
2002	749,419	90,769	12.12
2003	994,380	51,845	5.22
2004	1,046,950	105,157	10.05
2005	841,878	122,492	14.5
2006	916,371	76,984	8.4
2007	803,472	88,524	11.0
2008	911,653	107,370	11.8
2009	1,054,060	200,000	18.9
2010	1,370,754	346,605	25.29
2011	1,493,639	361,170	24.11
2012	1,503,931	520,000	
2013	1,735,810	400,269	23.05
2014	1,428,379	282,002	19.74

Source: Statistics of Education in Nigeria (2000 – 2005) and JAMB Website



From the above Table and Chart, the question is, how can the issue of low access to higher education be tackled? The only way, according to Munzali (2000), is to expand the capacity of our University system by a factor of ten. For him two possible ways of doing this are by multiplying the current admission by a factor of ten and expanding the number of existing Universities by a factor of ten. Nigeria cannot conveniently do any of the two at present because of the issues of poor infrastructure, facilities and non-availability of academic staff. The only possible way of bridging the gap between the exploding population of qualified applicants seeking higher education and inadequate space in available institutions according to Nwizu and Ekwelem (2008), is through distance education, with the hope that what conventional Universities cannot absorb, the Open University can take care of.

Beats Geographical Barriers

Recent advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have contributed to changes in the mode of delivering education nationwide. The International Council of Nurses (2004) acknowledges the fact that the use of different forms of Open and Distance learning makes it possible to teach and learn from anywhere in the world irrespective of one's

geographical location and the sources of delivery. The FRN (2004) in one of the goals of tertiary education states that tertiary education contributes to national development through high level relevant manpower training. The achievement of this goal, to a large extent, depends on accessibility of educational opportunities by individuals regardless of their geographical locations or place of work of individuals. Consequently, Oblinger, Barone and Hawkins (2001) affirmed that accessibility is seen as the primary benefit of distance education.

Innovative Method of Education Delivery

Distance Education provides students with the best and most up-to-date educational resources required for effective learning. It is also an innovative method of instructional delivery. This is why traditional Universities are transforming themselves from single to dual mode Universities. The increasing number of Open Universities and dual mode Universities being established across the globe lends credence to the importance and innovative nature of distance education. Faced with the new training demands and competitive challenges across the globe, Nigerian higher education institutions have used distance education as a response to critical educational problems of number, infrastructure, personnel and quality.

Manpower Development

One of the factors that gave credibility to distance education is the need for manpower development and training; continual skills upgrading and retraining; and technological advances that made it possible to teach more and more people at a distance. Nwizu (1998) observed that distance education has significantly contributed to manpower training in two major ways; direct training and retraining of manpower and release of funds to other institutions for manpower development. The use of internet-based and multimedia technologies in the training and retraining of manpower in Nigeria and elsewhere has revolutionized instruction. If the fundamental right of all citizens to learning is to be met, the traditional ways of manpower training/retraining need to be reinforced by innovative approaches and methods. The gap of unmet supply of trained manpower by conventional institutions is filled by distance education institutions. The quest for life-long education has also been made possible through distance education because manpower can be retrained at any given time.

Opportunity for Work-Study

Distance Education has provided opportunity for workers to study while on the job. It has offered opportunity for continuing education, life-long education and skills upgrading while on the job. One of the roles of distance education as stated in NPE (2004) is to meet special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees while at their work places. Distance Education has been used extensively in Nigeria to upgrade skills of teachers while on the job. The National Teachers Institute (NTI) was specifically set up to upgrade the skills of teachers. Its attraction in the area of skills upgrade for teachers in Nigeria lies in its capacity to reach large number of teachers without taking them away from the classroom.

Cost-Effectiveness

Distance education has been found to be cost-effective. The economies of scale offered by distance education makes it possible for more people to be trained at lower cost. When distance education institutions offer high quality learning materials and student support services, they achieve satisfactory retention and graduation rates that will ultimately avail them of economies of scale. Free standing distance education institutions enjoy economies of scale and cost effectiveness because of the large number of students offering their courses.

Flexibility in Learning

Distance education offers autonomy in education. Autonomy is the ability of a learner to take charge of his/her instructional process. Distance education is further justified on the grounds that it provides flexible and self-directed learning. When learners are independent and self-directed they tend to gain more out of the educational process. It provides self-paced learning and this generates initiative and creativity in the learner. With self-directed learning, the learner plans and organizes his/her learning and takes responsibility for what, how and where of his/her learning. The rigidity of conventional classroom teaching is removed entirely. Knowles (1975) argued that those who actively engage in self-directed learning, learn more and learn better than those who simply want to be taught. They are more active and therefore understand and retain better for transfer of knowledge.

Emergence, Growth and Development of Distance Education in Nigeria

The origin of Distance Education in Nigeria is traced to the mid 19th century following the liberalization of university education in the United Kingdom through extension and extra mural programmes. For the first time education was provided beyond the walls of British Universities. This gave some Nigerians the opportunity to register for programmes through correspondence education at the University of London. The correspondence education ushered in the exchange of printed materials, assignments and feed-backs by mail. Some of the notable Nigerians, according to Omolewa (1982), are Eyo Ita and H.O. Davies who passed the London Matriculation Examination; E.O. Ajayi, Alvan Ikoku and J.S. Ogunlesi who obtained the University of London degrees in Philosophy in 1927, 1929 and 1933 respectively. The establishment of the University College Ibadan in 1948 further saw some of the lecturers obtaining their University of London certificates through correspondence education.

The establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960 gave a new impetus to Distance Education in Nigeria as the Institution through her Extra Mural programmes trained individuals in certificate courses through extension and distance education programme (Odokara 1970). The scope of distance education of the University covered all the South Eastern zone of Nigeria. However, the springing up of newer Universities narrowed down the geographical coverage of the premier Universities.

Ajadi, Salawu and Adeoye (2008) observe that the first indigenous radio distance learning programme was the English by Radio programme of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation that followed independence in 1960. According to them, the programme was targeted at primary and secondary school levels and covered core courses at both levels, with some emphasis placed on the teaching and learning of Science, Mathematics and English. This was followed by the Educational Television programme of the National Television of Nigeria (NTV) and the Schools Educational Broadcast of the Radio Nigeria hosted in Lagos and relayed throughout the federation.

The growth of higher distance education in Nigeria saw the establishment of different categories of institutions.

- The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN): The NOUN was established to provide opportunities for learners in professional bodies, government institutions that

wish to have degrees and certificates in law, business administration, sciences, education and other related courses to do so from the comfort of their homes and work environment. This University was first established in 1983 but was closed down in 1984 by the Buhari Military administration due to reasons among which was inefficient postal services, quality issues and inadequate qualified manpower. After 16 years of closure, the University was re-established in 2002 as the nucleus of single mode centre for Distance Learning and Continuing Education in Nigeria to offer degree courses to Nigerians in various disciplines. It has its study centres all over the federation.

- The National Teachers Institute (NTI): This institute was established in 1976 to upgrade teachers to NCE level for the implementation of the UPE programme through distance education mode. Today the institute is offering degree courses in education using the distance education strategies.
- Centre for Distance Learning (CDL) Lagos: The centre was established in 1974 as Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) of the University of Lagos. It was later renamed Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT). Today this dual mode institute is providing degree programmes in various disciplines through distance education process.
- Centre for Distance Learning and Continuing Education (CDLCE) Abuja: This centre was formally established in 1990 but offered admission to its first year students in 1992. The time lag could be attributed to the initial problems associated with the setting up of most distance education programmes. The centre is an integral part of the University of Abuja and its major focus is to provide Nigerians with the opportunity of improving their academic standard through distance learning, part-time courses, sandwich programmes and continuing education classes.
- Institute of Distance Education Abia (IDEA): This institute was established in 1988 to provide university education to Nigerians who for one reason or the other could not get regular university education and those who are already working.

The gradual integration of ICT has led to the growth of Distance Education in Nigeria. Today most Universities in Nigeria have Distance Education programmes and are introducing E-learning programmes to also run side-by-side with conventional programmes. The field is still fast growing as newer Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are being

integrated. The development of distance education in Nigeria has witnessed tremendous growth in the last decade and the issue of quality is still paramount.

Quality, Quality Assurance and Dimensions of Quality: Conceptual Clarifications.

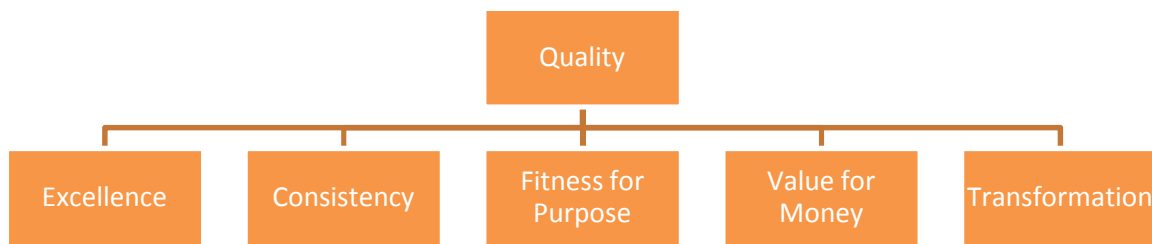
Quality

Quality is a generic concept. As such it is difficult to have a commonly acceptable definition of quality. Every quality expert defines quality in a different way. However, quality can be viewed from customer's perspective or from a specification-based perspective. From the two perspectives respectively, American Society for Quality (2008) sees quality as:

- The characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.
- A product or service free of deficiencies.

Uviah (2005) defines quality as the level of value in a product or a level of achievement, a standard against which to judge others. Juran in American Society for quality (2008) defined it as fitness for intended use. He posits quality as meeting or exceeding customer's expectations. Crosby (1979) defines quality as conformance to requirement. The requirement, according to him, may not fully represent customer expectation. Whether from customer's perspective or specification perspective, the essence of quality is to build and sustain confidence. Quality has to do with customer satisfaction; conforming to stipulated standard. Quality involves zero tolerance to defect in service delivery and/or physical production. Harvey and Green (1993) suggested five interrelated ways of defining quality:

- Excellence – Quality as something exceptional, distinctive and elitist.
- Consistency – Quality as a perfect, consistent or flawless outcome.
- Fitness for purpose – Quality as fulfilling pre-determined requirements, needs or desires.
- Value for money – Quality as return on investment.
- Transformation – Quality as enhancement and empowerment.



Quality is an incremental process. There is no end to it rather it increases continuously with the growth of programmes and organization. It is also believed that quality has bearing with productivity and, therefore, increases revenue. This may not be the case in some markets in Africa where people prefer cheaper and less quality products to those of quality. Quality aims at satisfying customers' needs and so distance education programmes must be qualitative in order to address the needs of their clients. Knowing the pivotal role of quality in programme implementation, distance education institutions must strive to ensure that they provide quality and relevant programmes.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is the process of determining quality. It was developed by the procurement directorate of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the military and nuclear industries from the 1960s and they placed emphasis on the following:

- quality control which referred to measures taken to remove faults at the end of the production process;
- the setting in place of systems to obtain better data about discrepancies between proposed and actual performances;
- the necessity of statistical processes to control non compliance;
- using budgets as incentives and penalties to encourage units to tighten up procedures and reduce errors; and
- using market analyses and client satisfaction to help keep clients interested in the products and services (Commonwealth of Learning 1999:4)

Quality Assurance is defined by Tian and Amin (2007) as a process of defining and fulfilling a set of quality standards consistently and continuously with the goal of satisfying all consumers, producers, and the other stake-holders. They further observe that quality assurance facilitates

recognition of the standards of awards, serves public accountability purposes, helps inform student choice, contribute to improve teaching learning and administrative processes, and helps disseminate best practices with the goal of leading to overall improvement of higher education systems. Quality assurance, according to Commonwealth of Learning (COL) (2012), is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of systems, projects or programmes in order to maximize the probability of standards being achieved for specified performance indicators. Belawati and Zuhairi (2007) posit that quality assurance is the systematic management and assessment procedure adopted by higher education institutions and systems in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements. Quality assurance is, therefore, a process by which educational institutions monitor their programmes in order to ensure sustainability and maximum output from the established programmes.

Commonwealth of Learning (1999) observes that quality assurance is an approach to organizing works that:

- ensures the institution's mission and aims are clear and known to all;
- ensures the systems through which work will be done are well thought out, fool proof, and communicated to everyone;
- ensure everyone's responsibilities are clear and understood;
- defines and documents the institution's sense of 'quality';
- sets in place systems to check that everything is working to plan; and
- when things go wrong – and they will – there are agreed ways of putting them right.

Nwizu (2011) defined quality assurance in education as those actions that an educational institution undertakes to ensure that they provide required standard of education, in order to produce quality manpower for national development. According to Mackoww and Witkoski (2005) quality assurance could be regarded as a useful method of improvement, modernization and internationalization of higher education through a procedure to assure and improve the quality of provision as it ensures the quality of academic (teaching – learning process and curriculum) and structural (building and physical facilities) provisions of courses and allow for an objective review of their quality.

Quality assurance enhances accountability and productivity and reduces wastage in any educational system. It is, therefore, necessary that every distance education institution must have well defined mechanisms for quality assurance at every stage of its developmental process; planning, implementation and evaluation. Most Distance Education institutions in Nigeria have their mechanisms for quality assurance stated in their policy documents. Unfortunately, most of these mechanisms are not as clear as identified by Commonwealth of Learning.

Dimensions to Quality Assurance

There are two dimensions to quality assurance in Distance Education: Internal Quality Assurance and External Quality Assurance.

Internal quality assurance is a self-regulatory and intra-institutional mechanism adopted by DE institutions themselves to ensure that their programmes are qualitative. Uzodinma (2008) observes that it involves intra-institution activities or practices for maintaining and improving and improving quality programmes. It is made up of continuous monitoring and periodic self-checks that expose DE institutions as to whether they are in conformity or non-conformity with existing standards (Internal and External). As DE institutions implement internal quality assurance mechanisms, they must be in line with the external mechanisms to enable them scale through the external accreditation at the appropriate time come.

Internal quality assurance is more useful to DE institutions because they have ownership of the programme and the students. They also have the responsibility of producing quality graduates that will give a positive image of the institution. Internal quality assurance gives autonomy to DE institutions and determines the extent to which their programmes address the vision and objectives for which the institutions was set up. Therefore, DE institution should lay greater emphasis on internal quality assurance which when attained will definitely assure external quality. Reichert (2008) observed that for internal quality assurance to be truly effective, there must be a strong commitment, belief in its benefits, a willingness to expose weaknesses and improve performance and the leadership, resources and capacity to support change and improvement.

External quality assurance is a regulatory standard and framework set up by national or other regulatory authorities to determine the extent to which internal quality assurance processes are effective. It calls for improved standards, greater accountability, more effective and efficient implementation process of DE programmes. External quality assurance is periodic and is conducted by the National Universities Commission (NUC). In Nigeria, NUC undertakes external quality assurance for both DE programmes and conventional programmes. NUC has standardised performance indicators with which external quality assurance of Nigerian universities are conducted.

Relevance of Quality Assurance in Nigeria Distance Education Programmes

Quality assurance has always been an important issue in Distance Education. This is one of the major reasons for the choice of quality as the topic for this inaugural. One would reasonably ask, ‘Why is quality assurance necessary in Nigerian Distance Education and Distance Education the world over?

Credibility of Programmes

A major justification of quality assurance in Nigerian Higher Distance Education is the need for credibility of programmes. Commonwealth of Learning (2005) emphasizes the issue of credibility in Distance Education when she observes that assuring the quality of education provision is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining credibility of programmes, institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide. Despite the growing nature of Distance Education in Nigeria, there is need for Distance Education institutions to prove that the quality of her students compare favourably with students of conventional programme. It is only through a comprehensive quality assurance system that this can be accomplished. Quality assurance is also justified on the grounds that it improves the image and reputation of Distance Education institutions. Distance Education, including e-learning, has an image problem which makes it to be viewed as second rate process of education. The Chronicle of Higher Education (2010) reports that 48% of U.S. faculty who have taught online courses conclude that they are inferior to face –to-face instruction and only 15% rate online learning as superior to face-to-face instruction. Shrock (2010) notes that, “we do not accept online coursework”. Statements of this nature are appearing on many websites of institutions today. A well developed quality assurance

system will delineate standards of achievement, document procedures for identified processes, and establish ways of responding to issues and clear accountability for outcomes. The result is greater public confidence as well as favourable image.

Quality of Graduates

The need of assuring quality in DE programmes is justified on the basis of agitation for the quality of graduates from distance education institutions in Nigeria. NUC (2005) observes that glaring evidence of possible rot in the universities includes the complaint from labour market on the poor quality of graduates who have to be exposed to another period of in-house training by their employees to make up for the deficiency in their skills. If conventional institutions could be criticized on grounds of quality, what becomes of distance education institutions? Distance education programmes have long been criticized on grounds of quality owing to the massification of education, which people believe will definitely lower the quality and standard of education. With this ill feeling on ground, DE programmes need to establish strong quality assurance mechanisms to protect and equip graduate of their programmes adequately.

Emergence of Open Education Resources (OER)

A shift in paradigm in Distance Education has led to the emergence of Open Education Resources (OER) movement. Open Education Resource (OER) are courses, learning materials, streaming videos tests, soft wares, and other tools, materials and techniques that are made freely available on the internet for any individual or group to use and are licensed (view copy right such as creative commons) for unrestricted distribution and the possibility of adaptation, translation, re-mix and improvement (COL 2012). Open Education Resource is based on the perception that knowledge is a public utility and that technology will help facilitate the access, sharing and consumption of knowledge. This raises another issue of quality. If people are freely given to access and use information generated online there is need to be sure of the quality of these information before they are made accessible to users.

Improves the Quality of Institution's Methods

Quality Assurance is relevant on the grounds that it is designed to improve the quality of institution's methods and educational products and outcomes. According to Daniel (2010) there

has always been hostility to the methods of Distance Education. Through quality assurance, learning materials, academic programmes, student support, standard of student learning and distance education methods are accepted. When quality is assured, students are more likely to experience quality instruction and interactions with the institution and staff leading to better learning outcome and great image of distance education methods.

Enhancement of Accountability

Quality assurance is further justified because it makes distance education institutions more accountable and ascertains returns on public investment in distance education programmes. There are many stakeholders in the business of distance education and they have different priorities. Nevertheless, their interest in quality assurance is universal with common interest in accountability and return on their investment. Through quality assurance investors secure accountability from distance education institutions and assess the extent to which they are satisfied with the returns on their investments.

Overview of Components and Fundamentals of Measuring Quality in Distance Education Programmes.

Information and Communication Technology/Media

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to any technological device adopted in communication and information management. They include radio, television, computer, satellite, phones etc. There appears to be a broad consensus on the potential advantages of using technology-based media in quality distance teaching. First among these is the opportunity, which the media offer for improving the quality of teaching and of students learning experiences (Curran 1990). The second advantage is that of widening access to adults and disadvantaged students, who would have otherwise been precluded from participation in education. There can be no doubt whatsoever that prints; in the form of printed texts are the most widely used medium for subject matter presentation in distance education (Nwizu 2003). It is more or less regularly supplemented by illustrations, diagrams, blueprints and sketches, occasionally for three-dimensional viewing and in some cases, by elements programmed in short step frames, linear or

branched (Holmberg 1995). Print makes for personalisation of information; it can easily be reviewed and can be made to function effectively in a wide variety of study environments.

In distance education, media selection possibilities are often extremely limited for financial and other reasons. Moemeka (1983) states that the problem that usually arises when a decision to use the mass media has been made is the choice of the right medium or media. Several attempts have been made to create a standard taxonomy, ascribing specific functions and application to each of the media available, so that a natural logical choice could be made for each part of a course of study (Reiser and Gagne 1983). Ever since Wilbur Schramm published his new classical study 'Big media' and 'Little media', in 1977, it has been generally admitted that any claim about the superiority of one medium over another has limited relevance. There is no cookbook or recipe for media selection that can be applied automatically in every educational system (Schramm 1977). Of course, it is what a medium can do and not what it is like technically that is important in selection situations. As aptly stated by Levie and Dickie and quoted in Clark (1975):

The attributes of a medium are the capabilities of that medium to show objects in motion, objects in colour, objects in three-dimensions, to provide printed works, spoken words, simultaneous visual and auditory stimuli.... Some attributes, such as the capacity to provide pictorial stimuli are shared by many media. Other attributes such as the capacity to show objects in three dimensions are properties of relatively few media. (P.199)

Hence these properties of motion, colour, three dimensions and simultaneous visual and auditory stimuli have to be checked for in media selection.

In a research conducted by Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) (1998) observes that Africa, like the distance learning community in other continents, launched its distance learning activities using self-study media such as print, audio and videocassettes. This later evolved into the use of radio and television. She is now utilising the new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, video conferencing and other forms of multimedia. Nonetheless, technologies such as print are still an important distance-learning tool as indicated on the table below.

Table I – ADEA Report on Percentage of Institutions Using Various Types of Media.

Types of Media	Anglophone N= 66	Francophone N= 67	Lusophone
	%	%	%
Print	96	88	90
Telephone	8	2	0
Fax	0	0	0
Audio Cassettes	17	15	20
Video Cassettes	13	31	
Radio	2	12	70
Audio conferencing	3	3	40
Video conferencing	0	0	0
Satellite	2	18	0
Internet/CD-Rom	5	34	0
Number of Information Provided	6	5	10
Number of Institutions or Programmes	66	67	10

Source- Tertiary Distance Learning in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Fully 96% of Anglophone institutions, 90% of Lusophone institutions and 80% of Francophone institutions use print as a learning medium. The Internet and CD-Rom are much more widely used in Francophone institutions (34%) than in either Anglophone (5%) or Lusophone (0%) institutions (ADEA 1998).

Personnel in Distance Education

Distance education needs academic and administrative staff in the same way as conventional education. However, the job requirements of staff members are different. Academics are called upon to write materials rather than to lecture and to tutor groups of students who are learning from printed materials rather than to teach them the conventional way (Perraton 1991).

Explaining the role of tutors in distance education, Tong (1994) observes that they cater for the majority of learners who require help from the tutors on such matters as study and examination skills, advice on completion of assignments or projects and feedback on their performance and progress on the study. He further states that provision of support and assistance from the tutors by way of counseling and advice will serve as effective means of encouragement and motivation to the learners.

A subjective review of responses to questions about staffing by Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) (1998) indicates that African Institutions that responded to these items relied heavily on content experts and local or regional study centre tutors or co-coordinators as the primary type of staff allocated to distance learning. Learning designers are very rarely mentioned staff, a notable gap compared to distance learning staffing patterns elsewhere. Numbers and types of professional and non-professional staff were, unfortunately not reported reliably enough to warrant tabulation, but the number of full-time staff is summarised in the table below.

Table 2 – ADEA Report on Number of Full-time Staff Employed for Distance Education

Number of Full-time Staff	Anglophone (N=66)	Francophone (N=67)	Lusophone (N=10)
	%	%	%
(a) 1 – 10	15	10	20
(b) 11 – 25	5	5	10
(c) 26 – 50	5	2	0

(d) 51 – 100	2	0	0
(e) 100+	3	2	10
(d)No information	71	82	60
Number of institutions or Programmes.	66	67	10

Source- Tertiary Distance Learning in Sub-Saharan Africa

According to the survey the non-response rate was as high as 82%. African Institutions in all language groups typically seem to employ 1 –10 full-time staff in distance education. Since matching data on student numbers are not available, it is hard to judge whether this level of staffing is adequate or inadequate.

People who have come from conventional posts, and learned on the job have staffed most distance-teaching institutions and it is evident that there are benefits in having a flow of people in both directions between distance and conventional education (Perraton 1991). One such benefit is the reduction in the cost accruing from the payment of such tutors. Experienced and qualified tutors also play important role in motivating distance learners. Despite the poor quality of some study materials, a good tutor would make a world of difference in effective delivery of knowledge. On the other hand, a poor tutor could cause a lot of damage to the learning process and discourage the dedicated and serious learners.

The need for faculty development in distance education has received international acceptance among teachers and administrators. Change in a complex educational environment is often difficult to accept let alone promote and this affects staff and development in educational setting. ADEA (1998) reports that of the sampled institutions for distance learning 15% of Anglophone institutions and 25% of the Francophone institutions indicated that staff training in distance education are available. Greater effort is needed towards staff development since it is a motivating factor for distance education personnel.

There is need for effective monitoring of distance education staff especially tutors. Cole, Coats and Lentel (1987) interpreted monitoring as part of the standardisation (quality control of tutors) procedure and for performance improvement as a means of staff development. They

further note that proper monitoring coupled with positive, constructive and supportive comments are indeed good devices to further develop the skills of tutors. Thorpe (1988) indicates that the purpose of monitoring is not only a quality control mechanism but also serves to react quickly to areas of problems that require immediate and remedial action.

Tong (1994) identifies the various ways by which tutors can be monitored for DE effectiveness to include:

- a) The speed of turnaround time in tutor marking and the quality of their marking and comments on the written assignment;
- b) The numbers attending tutorials will also reflect how well the tutors have been accepted by the learners. Those responsible for monitoring the tutors should visit such tutorials on a regular basis to obtain feedback from the learners on the tutors;
- c) The number of assignments submitted and the examination results will serve as an indicator on the progress of learners and the amount of assistance given to them by the tutors;
- d) The learner dropout rates of certain tutors will also explain the extent of encouragement given by the tutors.(p.113)

Admission Qualification into Distance Education Programmes

Open admission criterion is not necessarily the feature of a DE system. Kaye (1988) posits that of the 837 DE programmes for which details are available on the United Nations University/International Centre for Distance Learning (UNU/ICDL) database, only 8% have open selection criteria. Historically, primary and secondary teachers were the early focus of distance education programmes, in for example Tanzania (Mmari, 1997) and the Cameroon (Thomas, 1997). They were targeted by government planners concerned about the number of teachers struggling to offer quality education with only little or no formal education opportunity to become certified teachers. In most of the centres Adult students who do not possess required 'A' level qualification for entry to university degree courses, whose maturity and relevant professional experience make them valuable potential university graduates, are admitted. Their admission into specially designed preparatory courses in science with education, and in Business Administration, prepares them for entry into degree courses.

In Nigeria, continuing education for adults has been an integral part of the University of Lagos. University of Lagos (1998) stipulates that to be admitted into part I courses in Education, Chemistry and Physics, applicants must possess an “A” level qualification. While mature and practicing administrators, with the normal required “A” levels, are admitted to part I courses in Business administration.

The issue of standards has been raised with respect to the admission criteria for DE programmes. This overview has shown that majority of the DE institutions have definite admission criteria like conventional schools. However, in cases where people with lesser qualification are admitted, other factors like experience and maturity are put into consideration. In addition, qualifying tests and make up courses are mounted for the students to augment their lapses in qualification.

Support Services in Distance Education

Student support services are very important in DE. They are designed to help students reduce the effect of isolation that confronts them during their period of study. Ukeje (1994) identifies support services to include activities designed by the institution to focus on the student’s home, or institutional centre near the student’s home, that will provide for the student a private and individualised presentation of pre-packaged or pre-recorded course content together with the simulation of teacher and peer-group clarifications, that normally accompany the presentation of course and lectures in oral, group-based educational programmes. Holmberg (1995) suggests the following as support facilities: Study centres, library facilities, good road network, support staff, accommodation, warehouse services, finance, transport, medical and electronic gadgets, telephone and other facilities. Support services could come from the D.E institute, government or conventional institutions. Perraton (1991) states that a distance education institution may seek support from other institutions in form of borrowing specialist teachers or accredited media help.

The need for a library in an independent study setting is acute. Oladokun and Oyewumi (1999:43) opine that “one strongly held belief is that the quality of any academic programme is embellished where library facilities are accessible” They further state that for quality DE, accessibility to a library is a sine qua non. Open University (1992) further acknowledges the importance of library in DE when it notes that:

Using libraries is an essential part of your education. The most important purpose of a university education is to teach you to think for yourself. This implies learning where to find information and in particular, how to use the literature. (p.18)

Discussing access to library facilities, Unwin (1994) observes that an increasing number of universities offering distance learning programmes, many of whose students live considerable distances from their host institution, find it difficult to gain access to library services of a higher education standard. According to him, in the United Kingdom, existing formal arrangements between institutions cover full time students but ignore those on distance learning programmes. Howes (1983), however, suggests that that responsibility of ensuring that DE students are not disadvantaged by inequalities of access to library services lies directly with the academic responsible for the distance learning programme. In DE centres, DE staff advise students on study methods and how to channel their course of study. They also guide students in obtaining study materials and provide face-to-face tutorials and feedback on success or failure of courses to those writing the course materials.

Counseling is part of support service of DE programmes and it renders invaluable assistance to DE students. According to Omeje (2004) counseling is a programme which aims at equipping students with potentials that will enable them adjust fully within the environment they find themselves. Sewart (1984) divided the counseling function into four different groups of tasks: referred (to the proper agency) vocational (career planning), Information provision and coping with students personal study problems. These groups of counseling tasks are vital in a DE set up where students need proper guidance and support for satisfaction and completion rates. Hence, there is need for DE counselors to approach even those who seem to have problems instead of waiting to be approached. Whatever the medium used by the counselor, counseling must evidently 'promote a sense of close rapport between the student and the counselor'.

Study centres make possible face-to-face interaction between the tutor and the learners. Study centres are emphasized in Nigeria because learners are field-dependent and many distance teaching institutions find face-to-face meetings important as a motivational device for course completion. African tertiary institutions offer different types of learning support services. Nwizu

(2008) reports that a high percentage of universities provide student support services. However, the greatest type of support offered is face-to-face contact with teachers.

Evaluation of Course Content in Distance Education

Course content evaluation in DE helps to appraise educational quality on a micro level. It also helps to determine the usefulness and effectiveness of a given course to the students and the society at large. Thorpe (1988) interprets course to imply not only the course materials but also the whole process of interaction between the course materials, the students, the tutors and the supporting organisation as a whole. Holmberg (1995) explains it as a part of a curriculum in one particular subject. Ukeje (1994) argues that course materials are designed to aid teaching and they imply the preparation of print and non-print materials plus the production of a total learning experience for distance students that will parallel all that are characteristic of on-campus education, including additional home-works, laboratory practicals and library research periods and indeed all the activities of face-to-face study.

In this view of measuring the adequacy of course content, Mkpa (1994) suggests an appraisal of course content for DE programmes to cover validity, authenticity, appropriateness, suitability, comprehensiveness, learnability and utilitarianism. Holmberg (1995) identifies different bases for the judgment of the merits of and effectiveness of course content to include:

- i. Comparing achievement with objectives and performance standard; how well students achieve in relation to the purposes of the course.
- ii. Consulting experts; the course is subjected to criticisms by subject specialists recognised as educational authorities.
- iii. Consulting future employers and/or teaching bodies; consulting employers or teachers in universities or institutes of further training who are to receive the students.
- iv. Investigating students' view; the students' own opinions of the course content that they are taking.(p.186)

In this last approach students could be told to rate how motivating or interesting course content is and whatever information is collected is used to improve on the course content.

Distance educators are more interested in formative evaluation than summative evaluation. This is because formative evaluation investigates situations with a view to improving them while

summative evaluation passes value judgment on given situations (Holmberg 1995). He further observes that learner-centred evaluation approach in DE seeks to find out among other things the extent to which students have been able to pursue their purposes and interest through the programme.

Some Perceptions on the Quality and Standard of Nigerian University Distance Education Programmes

It is evident that DE programmes offered by Nigeria Universities are receiving wide patronage because of their ability to offer required skills and knowledge to students who have been excluded from conventional university programmes for various reasons. This means that much is desired in the implementation of university DE institutions in Nigeria in terms of quality and efficiency. The following are therefore expected in Nigeria DE programmes.

- Admission of qualified students
- Greater utilization of quality ICT
- Development of quality course materials
- Recruitment of quality faculty/Staff
- Provision of quality student support services
- Quality assessment procedure

Unfortunately DE programmes provided by Nigeria universities have low image when compared with conventional university programmes. This is based more on perception than on facts. University DE programmes have been criticized on the grounds that people with lower qualifications are admitted into the programmes. It is important to specify the criteria for admission of people into established course of study. However, one of the criticisms leveled against Nigeria DE institutes like the jettisoned Open University is that people with lower qualifications were admitted into the programmes. This, according to Ukeje (1994), will contribute to low standard in tertiary DE programmes. It has been further claimed that DE materials are developed by people who are not knowledgeable in ODL material production. Mkpa (1994) opines that a critical and cursory examination of course content and modules used in DE programmes in many Nigerian Institutions seem to reveal that many of the course developers and writers are ill equipped for the production of the materials in terms of presenting

the necessary components adequately. Nwingira (1990) laments that personnel and skills required in the development and production of multimedia distance learning material, seem to be inadequate and difficult to obtain in developing countries. Even the available ones appear not to be constantly retrained to update their knowledge. Nigeria DE programmes have also been indicted on grounds of ineffectiveness and slowness in communication delivery. Ukeje (1994) observes that in Nigeria, the media for DE programmes are inefficient, and at times non-existent, hence there is serious concern for proper maintenance of standards. He further states that when the printed materials are satisfactory, the electronic media, the telecommunication system and the postal system are generally inefficient. Recruitment of unqualified personnel and non commitment to the provision of student support services are issues raised against DE institutions in Nigeria. Distance Learning Institute (DLI) (1998) reports that most of the lecturers and directors of Tertiary distance learning programmes are not specifically trained or employed for DE programmes. Ukeje (1994) opines that the extent and efficiency of student support services certainly improve the quality and standard of DE programmes, but laments that some institutions do not seem to have involvement in support services, rather they focus more on attentive correction and comments on assignment by tutors.

The above factors seem to paint a gloomy picture of the quality and standard of Nigeria DE programmes. The question then is ‘Are the above scenarios a true picture of the quality and standard of DE programmes in Nigeria or are they baseless opinions of the programmes?’ My contributions in the area of research will provide the answer to this question and will be discussed later.

Dimensions for Assessing Quality of Distance Education Programmes

There is no single procedure for quality assurance in the implementation of distance education programmes. Every distance education institution is unique and should develop its quality assurance mechanism to suit its programme. However, there are basic dimensions to the implementation of quality distance education programmes. The Inaugural Lecturer will discuss these dimensions for us to understand the rudiments to quality assurance in higher distance education programmes in Nigeria. Dimensions for assuring quality in higher distance education programmes will be discussed under the following subheadings:

- Course Design and Development
- Personnel in Distance Education
- Student Support Services (SSS)
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Distance Education Policy Development
- Information and Communication Technology

Quality Assurance in Course Development

A great number of DE Programmes in Nigeria are built around course development. Hence, course development is a crucial determinant of the quality of Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria. Quality Assurance should be an integral part of every DE programme through the design and development of quality DE materials. It is, therefore, very important that DE Institutions must go extra mile to ensure that their course development process has an inbuilt mechanism for quality assurance.

In course design and development some questions come to mine mind:

- How do we plan for the course development? (Planning)?
- What do we intend to build into the course? (Purpose, Knowledge and skill)?
- How do we intend to impart the course? (Design the process)?
- How do we ensure that the learning has been impacted? (Assessment feedback)?
- How do we take care of flaws? (Editing and review)?
- How can we ensure quality learning? (Quality assurance)? (Bates 2013)

A well designed and developed course must intrinsically answer these questions so as to ensure quality. Therefore, a course developer must have these question in mind and ensure that the course has inbuilt mechanisms to address the above raised issues. The course must address programme objectives, encourage individual instruction, adhere to a specific design format, utilize variety of experts and learning experiences and develop critical thinking, creative learning

in students. It is pertinent to note that every DE Institution has the right to evolve its own course development approach provided the approach adequately assures quality.

Some Institutions adopt the individual approach. However, the course team approach is advocated on the grounds that it provides a synergized approach to course development. It also helps to produce coherent and quality material for instruction. Team members are assigned different responsibilities in which they possess expertise during the course development process. With this, rich materials are developed for effective instruction.

Regardless of the approach adopted in course development, there are some basic procedures and processes which a DE Institution must adhere to if quality is to be assured in their distance learning material. These processes are discussed hereunder.

Planning and Recruitment of Course Developers

To assure quality in course development, the DE Institution must have planned towards the course to be developed and outlined the course content using a team approach. It is along the lines of the course and the outline that course developers are recruited. Dekkers (1994) observes that the development of the best quality of instructional text requires input from a number of contributors. The course development team include the coordinator, writers/subject specialists, instructional designer, content valuator, graphic designer, editor and media specialists. The institution must ensure that high quality personnel are recruited for the development. The quality of the personnel to be recruited depends on their professional qualifications and experience in course design. The qualification and experience of writers are major factors in the quality of the course material developed.

The institution then organizes orientation for the course writers who must be experts in the field in which the course is being developed. The orientation spells out what they are expected to do during the course writing session. Some of the course writers may not be sufficiently grounded in interactive development of DE course materials. This should be handled during the orientation period since creating interactivity is a major function of the course developers. They must ensure that the course content is systematically and logically presented to the students to bridge the gap created by distance. The material to be developed could be in print or non-print form.

It is pertinent to also note that in Nigeria DE Programmes, majority of the lecturers are recruited on part-time basis, especially in dual-mode institutions. These lecturers are mainly recruited from conventional institutions. They may be proficient in their subject areas but lack skills in the development and design of DE material. This makes their orientation training indispensable so as not to compromise quality.

Reviewing Developed Course

Review is very important because it allows a second eye to view the material that has been developed. This will make for more input into the material and for better quality. It will give room for more security so as to make the material as effective as classroom teaching. If the material is highly defective, it is sent back to the developer for revision based on the comment of the reviewer. These are ways to ensure that quality is built into the course.

When the course developers are done with the job of developing the course, a draft copy of the course is prepared and circulated to the developers (writing expert) for review and correction. This is necessary to ensure that there are no typographical mistakes and that the developed courses are presented the way the developers organized them. Further inputs can be made by the experts where they deem necessary. The developers can also conduct a peer review on their own by giving their materials to other experts in the field who will constructively critique the write up for better quality and professional touch.

Thereafter, a draft is produced. This draft is now circulated to the quality assurance team. The team is constituted by the institution and their duty is to ensure that the draft course conforms with the expected standard and requirements of course development. The quality assurance team is usually made up of experts in DE material development (instructional designers) and senior experts in the field of study. The team will develop their own guideline and review the materials along these lines. This is to ensure that the writers perfected the laid down rules for DE material development and that the subject matter content is adequate and within the comprehension of the students. When this is over and the course satisfies all requirements, the next stage is editing of the course.

Editing the Course Material

All DE Institutions must view this aspect of course development with the seriousness it deserves. Editing of course material should involve formal, content, graphic and language editing. The institution may wish to use specifically employed editors or instructional designers for the editing process. Some institutions use free-lance editors. There is no problem provided the editors have track record of quality editing. According to Shabani and Okebukola (2001), the editor ensures that:

- The units are structured according to accepted pedagogical and instructional design principles.
- The subject matter has been presented thoroughly and accurately for the learners to understand.
- Sufficient activities are provided.
- Units provided sufficient activities.
- Units provided sufficient study advice.
- Issues relating to level of difficulty, language etc are taken care of.
- Language is edited.
- Suitable format is adopted.
- The course units are copy edited and a house style has been followed.

In addition to the above, the aesthetics of the course material is of paramount importance because it creates the desire to study in the learners. In this regard, the graphic editor edits the graphic designs on the material. He edits the:

- Suitability of the diagrams,
- Placement of the illustrations,
- Adequacy of the diagrams and illustrations,
- The size and layout of the graphics, and
- The aesthetics of the cover and the entire course material.

Developmental Testing of Course Material

This is a very important aspect of course development because it is the 1st stage of feedback mechanism from the students. It provides reactions from a sample of users of the course. The

sampled group must have the same characteristics with the users but the learning conditions may not be the same.

Developmental testing is done after the course material has been revised in the light of critical comments from the reviewers, quality assurance group and editors. The developmental testing can be done through field trial testing or pilot testing. Pilot testing could take a longer time to complete than trial testing but it gives a more reliable result in development of course material.

In trial testing, the sampled group is given the developed course material. They go through the material and give their opinion on the overall suitability of the material. Their response to the Intext Assignments (1A) and Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA) will give the course developers the full idea on the suitability, adequacy and quality of the material. The material is then revised in the light of the feedback from the sample.

Development and Production Process of Course Material

The way and manner in which course material is developed and produced has significant impact on the quality of the material. It is important that a DE Institution must develop a standard procedure for the development and production of her course material. The process may include, among others:

- The reviewed and edited materials are submitted to the quality assurance unit together with the comments from the editors.
- The word processor effects the corrections.
- The material is sent back to the reviewers and editors to ensure that their inputs have been effected.
- The course material is typeset and all diagrams and illustrations are put in the appropriate place.
- The quality assurance unit organizes an editing session where all those involved in the material development are invited to proofread and critique the course material.
- Camera Ready Copy (CRC) is developed for printing.
- Final production of the course material

Printing of course material

The printing and finishing touches given to the material are the duties of the printer and the quality assurance unit. The institution may have a printing press of its own or could give the production out to a printer where the institution does not have one. The final outlook of the course material is a source of quality to the course developed. The course developer, therefore, must develop interest and make input in the final production process. Quality has to be ensured in the final physical appearance of the course material. The course material must be properly packaged so as to look attractive to the users. Attention should be paid to paper quality, final formatting, printing quality, legibility and proper placement of illustration and other printing details.

Evaluation of Course Material

Evaluation of course material is an indispensable component of effective and efficient distance education programme. It is essential because it sustains the relevance and the usefulness of the developed materials. Distance education materials should be reviewed at intervals for update and currency. Information generated from course material evaluation are used to review the material for improved teaching and learning. Shabani and Okebukola (2001) identify why institutions evaluate their course materials as follows:

- To improve their teaching learning effectiveness
- To convince oneself that all the efforts and time put in the process of course development are worth it
- To convince people that the distance learning mode of instructional delivery can be as effective, if not more effective than conventional modes.

Seels and Glasgow (1998) posit that evaluation does not only show the learning effectiveness of course materials, but can provide useful information on various other aspects of course materials, including content accuracy, technical quality, user acceptability, style and teaching strategy.

Evaluation information can be generated through questionnaire, interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with tutors, learners, supervisors and employers of graduates of distance education institutions. The need for review of a course material is ascertained from answers to the following questions:

- Is the course content still current?

- Do the graduates function effectively on the job?
- Do the students find relevance and satisfaction from the course?
- Is the turnover rate high?
- Are the students coping with the materials?

Information received from these questions will determine whether a course material should be review at any point in time. Most course evaluation processes are formative because information generated from the evaluation are used to improve on the quality of the course material.

Assuring Quality in Distance Education Personnel

DE personnel, especially tutors are the single most important resource available to DE students in Nigeria. There is need for institutions to select effective and competent instructors if the objectives of their programmes will be realized. Quality in DE faculty can be assured through the following ways:

- Recruitment criteria
- Staff development programmes
- Monitoring and evaluation of faculty
- Reward system for effectiveness.
- Staff welfare and commitment

The faculty's composition and qualifications are vital components to creating high quality distance education programmes. Recruitment of faculty must be based on high level of expertise. Faculty expertise goes beyond paper qualification. However, qualification is the prima facie consideration for expertise in Nigeria. In other words, added to qualification, a faculty member must be experienced and display knowledge and understanding of the subject matter which he/she intends to deliver. Basically, the recruitment and appointment procedures of the DE institution must ensure that recruited staff have minimum level of competence which can be built upon. European Network in Quality Assurance (ENQA) (2009) notes that it is important that those who teach have full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to

students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. The Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2007) posits that school's faculty should understand and embrace the change from a teaching-centred to a learning-centered environment; with learners, rather than students, and with facilitators and designers of learning experiences, rather than teachers. According to the group, the former concentrates on achievement of learning goals and seeks the most effective ways of accomplishing them while the latter focuses on the organization and delivery of information.

Once faculty is recruited, staff development programmes must be put in place for quality assurance. Orientation programme must be organized for the recruited staff for adjustment. Orientation programme is vital in Nigerian DE programmes because most of the faculty are from conventional institutions and may not be grounded in the principles of distance education. The roles of faculty in distance education are different and more specific than the roles of on-campus teachers. It is therefore important that these roles are delineated and made known to faculty during orientation for effectiveness. It is fundamental to distance education that both faculty and students display skills with a wide range of technologies. Orientation will provide the opportunity to assess them on their level of use of Information and Communication Technology facilities.

Faculty should also be provided with opportunity for on-the-job training and continuing education programmes to ensure quality in the programmes. Effective implementation of distance education programmes requires constant update of technical and pedagogical skills. There is need to sponsor them to workshops, seminars and conferences to update their knowledge in distance education principles. Such workshops are a strong source of networking and collaboration that could enhance the quality of distance education programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation of staff is a means of quality assurance of faculty. Apart from regular field visits to monitor faculty, students are given the opportunity to assess the faculty as a monitoring strategy and rating scales are provided for this assessment in terms of their performance. From their responses, inferences on the quality of faculty can be deciphered. This should be done at regular intervals to keep the faculty on their feet. Evaluation is effective when distance education institutions have well-defined criteria for assessment and monitoring of staff.

The criteria must emanate from their roles. According to The Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2007), distance education faculty is responsible for ensuring:

- effective creation and delivery of instruction
- evaluation of instructional effectiveness and student achievement
- the development of appropriate assessment strategies
- continued improvement of instructional programme
- innovation in instructional process
- accessibility to students consistent with the school's expectations and student demand

Evaluation of faculty must reflect the roles expected to be performed by faculty. The criteria for evaluation must be consistent with the functions of the faculty. In this way faculty commitment is assured for quality service delivery.

For quality in DE programmes, there is need to put in place a reward system that will reinforce and generate healthy competition among faculty. Results from evaluation are used as the basis for reward. Promotion is a form of reward and evaluation outcomes are adopted in deciding who should be promoted and who should not be promoted. Other forms of reward can be in form of awards for excellent performance in expected roles of faculty members. With reward systems, faculty put in their best for quality delivery.

Staff welfare should be of paramount importance to a distance education institution if quality distance education programme is to be achieved. Staff should be well remunerated and taken care of for quality service delivery. Taking care of personnel gives them a sense of fulfillment and belonging for utmost performance.

Where a faculty is not committed to the success of the programme or is exhibiting unbearable low quality, the institution should not hesitate to fire the faculty as continuous retaining of such faculty will impact negatively on the quality of the programme.

Assuring Quality in Student Support Services

Student support services are inevitable in the delivery of distance education programmes. The services are made available at the locations of the students in order to bridge the distance between the students and the tutors, thereby reducing the effect of isolation and subsequent dropout from programmes. The adequacy and appropriateness of student support services for a

DE programme has to be ensured by institutions. Some of the student support services include face-to-face teaching, library, counseling and study kits. To assure quality in the delivery of students support services, the services must be relevant to the needs of the students. Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2007) states that to foster student achievement, institutions have the responsibility to identify students' needs and problems associated with the distance learning environment in order to adopt a proactive stance for monitoring student progress to address barriers and difficulties students encounter in their locations. There is need to identify the type and nature of student support required by the students before they are put in place.

Support services must be accessible to the students. Accessibility is an indicator of quality. When support services are accessible to students, it offers the institution the opportunity to determine their effectiveness in the delivery of the programme. The DE institution must constantly monitor, analyse and improve the effectiveness of the student support provided to their students.

The essence of student support is to sustain students in DE programme. It is, therefore, necessary that quality student support services must be sensitive to feedback from students who utilize them. Support facilities must be able to provide immediate feedback for quality.

Student support services must offer opportunity for tutor –student and student-student interactions. Distance education students work independently most of the times but there is need for interaction. Interaction offers the opportunity for discussion and clarification which leads to quality delivery of programmes. Interaction could be one-on-one or it could be group based.

Student support services must offer mechanisms that will help monitor and support learners throughout their stay in the programme. If these mechanisms are not in place, the programme experiences high dropout rate. Retention is important in the delivery of quality distance education programme. It is therefore important that counseling services be provided to monitor student progress for quality distance education delivery.

Assuring Quality in Assessment

Assessment of learning outcome is a crucial aspect of quality assurance in distance education. This is because most of the criticisms leveled against distance education hinges on inefficient assessment procedures. It is very important that distance education institutions must ensure that assessment of instruction is done under strict and secured conditions. Evaluation and assessment procedures in distance education are in form of Intext Assignments (IAs), Tutor Marked Assignment (TMAs) and Examination.

Assessment policy should specify the need for formative and summative assessment of students. Formative assessment is made up of IAs and TMAs. These could come in form of projects, quizzes, puzzles, crosswords, among others. Summative assessment, on the other hand, is made up of formal examination or testing to ascertain the extent to which the objective of a course and the knowledge and skills at specific points in the programme are attained.

To assure quality in Nigeria distance education programmes, it is necessary to maintain parity in assessment procedures and methods with conventional programmes. The procedures should also comply with those laid down by the quality assurance agency. This trend was observed by Jung (2005) when he posited that in Open University of the United Kingdom, their assessment framework complied with the national quality assurance agency code of practice for assessment of students.

In employing examination in distance education programme, institutions must assure integrity in examination through

- Firm student identification
- Moderation of examination question papers and marking scheme
- Ensuring adequate levels of security in testing procedures
- Adequate arrangement for students and communication of same to them before the examination
- Explicit timing of the examination and strict compliance to such timings
- Documented procedures assuring that security of personal information is protected in examination and release of results
- Ensuring that cases of examination malpractice are adequately handled
- Dissemination of results without delay

It is important to note that due to the level of infrastructural and technological development in Nigeria distance education programmes, majority of the electronically offered programmes are examined in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programmes.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Quality Distance Education

Information and Communication Technologies are very effective tools for quality assurance in distance education programmes. There are various classifications of ICTs in distance education. Haddad (2007) classifies learning technologies into two: Technologies in location and technologies of distance. Technologies in location according to Haddad, are printed materials, slides, transparencies, scanners, digital notepads, chalkboards, audiotapes, films and videos, digital books, CDs and computer projection while technology of distance include correspondence, radio, television, web pages, web internet, intranet and webcast.

The potentials of ICTs in the delivery of quality distance education programmes are numerous and inexhaustible. ICTs, especially the internet, have revolutionised the world in terms of instruction, work and living. According to Gunadasa (2007), the internet is the most successful educational tool to have appeared in a long time because it offers a global open platform storage, display and communication. It incorporates tools like satellite conferencing, instant message, bulletin boards, and e-mail to facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous communication between students and instructors and among students. Haddad (2007) observes that ICTs have proven to be effective ways of enabling high quality educational materials to reach remote clientele and overcome geographical and cultural hurdles.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) advances the quality and effectiveness of higher distance education in Nigeria through the following:

- Enhanced access to educational resources.
- Provision of innovative and dynamic methods of teaching/learning.
- Provision of diverse and flexible learning experiences to students.
- Provision of education at low marginal cost.
- Appropriate selection of ICT

ICT has made the inclusive nature of distance education possible. It has bridged the gap in space and time and has made the widening of access to education possible. The employment of ICT in distance education (DE) has increased students' access to educational resources, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction. Students can source limitless information online in order to improve the quality of learning. Instructors equally have access to unlimited materials to facilitate the quality of their instruction.

ICT provides a barrage of innovative and dynamic methods of teaching and learning. With ICT, learning is personalized and a variety of learning paths are available for students to choose from. It makes instruction learner-centred and students may wish to take course from several institutions or even combine campus-based programmes with online programmes. This enriches their experiences and creates room for quality in distance education programmes. There is no restriction on what method the instructor or student should adopt. They rather adopt methods that are suitable and convenient for them. This leads to effective instruction and enhances quality.

ICT provides distance learners with diverse and flexible learning experiences. Learning experiences are external conditions in the environment to which a learner can react to facilitate learning. With ICT, distance education learners are exposed to both real and simulated learning experiences that will facilitate quality learning. Accessing other peoples' experiences online generates greater enthusiasm in the learners and this facilitates learning. ICT makes instruction real and provides rich and varieties of learning experiences which enhances the quality of distance education programmes.

ICT enables distance education to provide instruction at a low marginal cost. It facilitates the instruction of unlimited number of students at a time thereby reducing the marginal cost for instruction. Funds saved from massive instruction can be reinvested in other aspects of distance education programmes for quality. Furthermore, innovations in distance education are easily diffused through ICT at a low cost. This contributes effectively to quality distance education programmes as newer methods of instruction are quickly disseminated and applied immediately for effectiveness. ICT makes distance education cost efficient because it addresses the problem of huge capital investment made by government in setting up conventional schools. Once the ICT is in place, it is used at zero marginal cost.

Appropriate selection of suitable and relevant ICTs improves the quality of distance education programmes. Institutions must pay adequate attention to the nature and types of ICTs employed in the instructional process. It is true that no media can claim superiority over another, but due consideration has to be given to the relevance of the media to the instructional process. For quality, a combination of ICTs is recommended in distance education programmes because the advantages of one ICT will offset the disadvantages of the other. In ICT selection, due consideration has to be given to cost, relevance, user friendliness, accessibility, technical-know-how and infrastructural facilities.

Nigerian Universities set up distance education programmes and students come with great expectations from such programmes. ICTs are strategic assets in the delivery of quality distance teaching and learning. ICTs should be able to provide an interactive and collaborative learning environment anytime, anywhere. It is, therefore, the responsibility of distance education institution to meet the technological needs of the students while assuring quality.

Policy as a Quality Issue in Higher Distance Education in Nigeria

Distance Education is adopted by Nigeria to meet the huge need for human capital development and the challenges of the 21st century. It has the potential to provide quality education to greater number of people at relatively reduced cost by virtue of a system that has quality assurance mechanisms integrated into the policies, processes and procedures. However, how to assure quality has been a major issue at different fora and it is viewed as one of the pertinent issues for distance education in the 21st century (Commonwealth of Learning 2009).

It is based on the above issue of assuring quality that policies have become very important to shape the practice of Distance Education in Nigeria. Policy in Distance Education is a written course of action (statutes, institutional mission, procedures, guidelines or regulations) adopted to facilitate programme development and delivery in distance education (King, Nugeat, Eich, Mlinek & Russell 2015). Unfortunately, despite the importance of policies in DE, a considerable volume of literature is concerned with details of the practice of DE and not with the policies of distance education (Perraton 1997). Perraton further notes that most of the literatures are rather

descriptive rather than analytical and with this; we are short of research finding that can guide policy makers.

Some efforts have been made in the past and presently by the Nigerian government in the area of policy development in DE. Sequel to a workshop on distance education held at the ECOWAS Secretariat in September 2000, in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Federal Government of Nigeria developed a plan for a decade of distance education in Nigeria with the following objectives, among others, in mind (ADEA 2002):

- Enactment of a National Policy on Distance Education, as a component of the National Policy on Education.
- Establishment of a solid institutional frame-work for distance education in Nigeria, following a carefully conducted needs assessment studies.
- Establishment of distance education as a core component of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme to jump-start the UBE delivery process.
- Reopening of the National Open University of Nigeria to address access and equity issues in higher education.
- Provision of higher education to a minimum of one million qualified candidates through the distance and open learning modes involving public and private sector participation, in areas of high manpower needs.
- Establishment of a national open school (secondary) to address access and equity issues in secondary education.
- Training of 20,000 distance education operators, including course writers, support service providers, producers, managers, instructional designers and technicians.
- Establishment of a virile ICT-driven distance education delivery system.

It is pertinent to note that apart from reopening the National Open University in 2002 the other targets in the action plan are yet to be met.

The National Policy on Distance Education is an important document for quality assurance in Nigerian Distance Education. This is because the policy guides the actions and practice of Distance Education in Nigeria. It is disheartening that with the establishment of the National Open University and the expansion of DE through establishment of e-learning centers by universities, there is still no National Policy on Distance Education. Jegede (2000) notes that while the National Policy on Education document was quite elaborate in itemizing and

formulating the aims and objectives for the various aspects of education and modes of education, there was, and there still is, no section which formally deals with Open and Distance Education. This has not adequately given legitimacy and acceptance to distance education as a means of education (Nwizu, 2008). Policies relating to DE are handled under higher education. The policy views the role of distance education to include:

- i. Providing access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities.
- ii. Meeting special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work place.
- iii. Encouraging the internationalization, especially of tertiary education curricular.
- iv. Ameliorating the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing Nigerian experts as teachers regardless of their locations or place of work.

There is need for a National Policy on Distance Education in Nigeria. Nigeria has come of age and with the establishment of single mode institutions and e-learning centres, DE should have a separate policy for quality to be maintained. Nwizu (2008) observes that the policy will aim at standardizing distance education programmes in Nigeria. Furthermore, it should specify how DE programmes in Nigeria should be run and at what levels. It should also set targets to be achieved at each level. Policies are expected to act as guidelines in quality implementation of programmes. This should be applicable to DE programmes as in other education programmes.

However, the most important document on quality assurance in higher distance education programme is the policy framework on quality assurance. One major problem plaguing the general acceptability of distance education in Nigeria, as an alternative educational delivery system, is the issue of creditable quality assurance. Nigeria higher distance education institutions are accused of paying more attention to issue of access at the detriment of quality. There exists no comprehensive quality assurance policy by any distance education institution in Nigeria. The distance education institutional policies on quality assurance are expected to have bearing and direction from the National policy. Every distance education institution in Nigeria is expected to develop an elaborate institutional framework on quality assurance to discreetly guide quality assurance. Unfortunately, this document does not exist in these institutions. Rather brief sections

of their strategic plans and policy documents are devoted to a general commitment in assuring quality in the programmes. The current effort to integrate ICT in Nigeria higher distance education necessitates that there should be a policy on ICT Integration. The policy should aim at harmonizing the strategies for the integration process so that quality will not be compromised while improving access to education through ICTs.

The National University Commission (NUC) accredited the following distance learning institutes in Nigeria:

- i. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
- ii. The National Teachers Institute (NTI), Kaduna
- iii. The Centre for Distance Learning (CDL), Obafemi Awolowo University
- iv. The Distance Learning Institute (DLI), University of Lagos
- v. The Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Lagos

The above named accredited institutions have well-articulated policies which are pre-requisite as stipulated in the NUC guideline for establishment of DE institutions. These policies generally cover the UNESCO major components of distance education system; the mission, programmes and curricular; teaching and learning strategies, learning materials and resources, communication between teachers and learners, interaction between learners, support delivery locally, the delivery system, the student and tutor sub-system, staff and other experts, management and administration, the requirement of housing and equipment, and mechanisms for quality assurance. However, there is need for a discreet quality assurance policy framework as this is the bane for credibility and acceptability of distance education programmes.

It is encouraging to note that the University of Nigeria is at the verge of establishing a Centre for Distance Learning. The policy and strategic plan for the centre have been approved by the Senate and Governing Council. The first stage of the resource verification has been concluded and the developed materials are currently being reviewed for quality assurance. It might interest you to know that this inaugural lecturer sits on the board of the centre and is currently a member of the Quality Assurance Team.

An acceptable DE policy must consider the following quality mechanisms:

- Well stated vision and mission
- Involvement of stakeholders in the development of the policy
- Strategies for monitoring the implementation
- Clearly spelt out action plans
- Framework on ICT usage
- Framework for quality assurance usage
- Clear statement on partnership and collaboration
- Regular review of the policy
- Statement on funding

My Contributions

I earlier observed that my contributions to the field of distance education will help provide answer to whether higher distance education institutions in Nigeria assure quality in their programmes or not. My contributions in this area will be discussed under the following subheadings:

- Implementing Internal Quality Assurance Strategies by Distance Education Institutions in Nigeria
- Provision of Student Support Service for Quality Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria
- Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of ICTs in the provision of quality DE Programmes in Nigeria
- Staff and Staff Development for Quality Distance Education Programmes
- Administration of DE Institutions for Effective Delivery of Quality Programmes
- Policy and Policy Implementation for Quality Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria.
- Distance Education Media and Quality in Adult Education Programmes

Implementing Internal Quality Assurance Strategies by Distance Education Institutions in Nigeria

Distance Education has great potentials for expanding access to education irrespective of the time and geographical location of the learners. However, distance education in a bid to widen access has been criticized on the grounds that it compromises quality. Nwizu (2011) investigated this criticism by conducting a survey research to determine the extent to which Nigeria universities implement internal quality assurance strategies to maintain standard in instruction and output. Contrary to the criticism, the study found out that DE Institutions implement quality assurance strategies for improved programmes. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. Some of the strategies implemented are in the areas of specific admission policy, screening of certificates according to admission criteria, recruitment of qualified and experienced staff, use of trained personnel in design of course materials, effective monitoring of exams, and supervision of tutors.

However, the study reported the need for improvement in the areas of use of interactive ICTs, provision of well equipped study centers, provision of staff development programmes, provision of immediate feedback to learners and current and adequate library materials at the centre.

When the level of implementation of the outlined strategies was compared across DE Institutions in Nigeria, no significant difference was found. This implies that all the respondents have similar opinions on the level to which DE Institutions implement quality assurance strategies for their student. It was therefore, recommended, among others. that DE Institutions and government should create greater awareness on the credibility of DE certificates to make them as acceptable as conventional certificates. Also, that funds be made available and policies put in place by the government to facilitate greater integration of interactive media in DE Programmes of Nigeria universities.

Nwizu (2002) conducted a study to determine if Nigeria distance education institutions have strict admission criteria in the selection of their students. The study found out that contrary to the general belief of critics, higher distance education programmes in Nigeria have strict admission criteria; that admission has never been based on open entry. However, in some cases, work experience is taken into consideration and waiver granted to the candidates.

Provision of Student Support Service for Quality Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria

Nwizu (2001) argued the inevitability of quality student support services in a distance education setting and, therefore, investigated the extent to which Student Support Services are provided by DE Institutions in Nigeria. She reported that student-tutor interaction is effectively provided through face-to-face contact at study centres in the areas of supervision, delivery of course content, analysis of comment on Intext Assignments (IA) and Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs), clarification of course materials and motivation and sustainability in the programmes. However, interaction in the areas of counseling and interaction through channels of complaining about poor tutorials were ineffective. These must be provided to assure quality in distance education Programmes.

Ekwelem and Nwizu (2003), observed the pivotal role of library in the support of DE students. The researchers investigated the accessibility of library services to distance education students. The study revealed that distance education student have access to reference materials, serials, photocopy and United Nations documents. However, they do not have access to government documents and audio-visuals. The authors emphasized the need for computerization of library facilities and services for greater access and quality delivery of library services to distance education students. They also suggested that DE Institution set up mobile library services for easy access of the facilities/services to their students.

Omeje and Nwizu (2007) further investigated the availability and effectiveness of counseling service to students for quality distance education programmes. This study is vital considering the crucial role of counseling in the reduction of dropout rate of students in DE Programmes. The study reported that educational (good study habits) personal-social (adjustment and interaction) and career (career education) counseling are provided to DE students. However, the study revealed that psychological counseling is not provided to the students. This is critical and explains why there is high dropout rate in some DE Programmes. It was also reported that the counseling services provided have been effective in the academic adjustment of students in DE Programmes.

The researchers recommended that psychological counseling be provided for quality delivery of distance education programmes and to eliminate the feeling of isolation and subsequent dropout by students. Also, there is need for institutionalization of resident guidance counselors in all the distance education centres.

Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of ICTs in the provision of quality DE Programmes in Nigeria

Information and communication technology is at the heart of distance education. This central role and claims of non-availability and ineffective utilization of ICT in Nigeria DE Programmes propelled the researcher to investigate different aspects of ICT availability and usage in Nigeria DE Programmes (Nwizu 2003, 2006, 2008 and Nwizu & Ekwelem 2008). The above researches reported that mainly print media are accessible and often utilized in DE Programmes in Nigeria. These include printed course materials, study guides and mimeographs. Electronic media like television and radio are only used for information dissemination to students. Telephone is not used for instruction rather it is used for communication between students and tutors and among students. On the other hand, the researchers reported non-availability and non-utilization of electronic Information and communication technologies that provide interactivity in DE Programmes. Such interactive ICTs include internet, tele-conferencing computers, satellite conferencing and audio conferencing. Even in this era of e-learning highly interactive ICTs are still not accessible to DE students. This has negative implications for the delivery of quality distance education programmes in Nigeria.

The non availability and utilization of these interactive ICTs can be attributed to the cost, limited availability of infrastructural facilities for usage and inadequate technical manpower for operation and usage (Nwizu 2003). The implication of non usage of interactive ICTs is that DE Programme of Nigeria Universities will not be able to complete favourably with other DE Programmes on the continent in particular and the world at large. There is then need for DE Universities and the Federal Government to put in place infrastructural facilities, policies and funds that will make ICTs available and effectively utilized in DE Programmes in Nigeria. The role of multi-media approach for delivery of quality distance education Programmes is undisputable and must be encouraged at all cost.

Staff and Staff Development for Quality Distance Education Programmes

Sustainable and delivery of quality distance education Programmes require the recruitment of experienced and qualified staff for the programmes. It is also important that the potentials and skills of distance education staff be constantly developed for effectiveness and currency. Nwizu

(2006) assessed the quality of staff and staff development programmes in university distance education programmes in Nigeria. The result shows that the qualified staff recruited are; subject matter specialists, specialists in the production of materials, counselors, printers, editor, typists, bursary personnel and administrative staff, secretaries, clerks and messengers. However, personnel like experimental kit designers, research workers, broadcast producers, graphic designers and technicians do not have sufficient qualification and experience.

On staff development programmes, it was found out that only seminars are organized for distance education staff. Other staff development programmes were not provided namely: Scholarship for further studies, granting of study leave with pay, sponsorship of local and international publications and sponsorship of researches.

Human resources are the bedrock of Nigeria DE Programmes. It is therefore, pertinent that their skills be updated for delivery of quality distance education Programmes. However, due to poor funding and in a bid to save cost, most DE Institution in Nigeria play down on the advantages of faculty development. The insufficient availability of technical staff and the limited opportunity for staff development programmes have implications for the provision of quality DE Programmes. Distance Education Institutions must facilitate the recruitment, training and retraining of their staff for the delivery of quality Programmes.

Administration of DE Institutions for Effective Delivery of Quality Programmes

Nwizu (2004) observed that once an institutional framework is chosen for the delivery of Higher DE Programmes, there is need to adopt an effective and efficient administrative strategy to address contemporary challenges and attain the overall goals of the institution. The paper argues that critical to the administration of Higher DE Programmes are course material development, media selection and utilization, staff concerns, support services and feedback on assignments. These factors, she noted, have to be closely monitored for effective administration and delivery of quality distance education programmes.

Nwizu (2007) further investigated the role of ICT in the effective administration of DE Programmes in Nigeria. The potentials of ICTs in the generation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of knowledge and information make it inevitable in the administration of DE Programmes. The researcher argues that for quality administration of DE Programmes, ICTs

must be employed in record keeping, generation and dissemination of information, counseling services, planning and monitoring, assessment and evaluation of distance education programmes.

The researcher, however, emphasized the importance of Networking in quality administration of distance education Programmes. Networking through ICT she argues facilitates information sharing, sharing of best practices, sharing of research findings, retrieval of volume of knowledge to create a knowledge economy for DE students, and creation of discussion groups for effective communication and exchange of ideas. It is necessary that DE administrators must possess ICT skills that will facilitate their access to those potentials of ICTs in the administration of Higher DE Programmes in Nigeria.

Policy and Policy Implementation for Quality Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria.

Nwizu (2008) observed that policy is an important issue in the delivery of quality DE programmes in Nigeria. The researcher noted that it is disheartening that similar policy guide conventional higher education and higher DE Programmes in Nigeria. This has not adequately given legitimacy and acceptance to DE as a means of education. There is need for a national policy on Distance Education in Nigeria. The researcher further argued that Nigeria has come to the age of having a separate policy on distance education, especially with the establishment of the National Open University of Nigeria. The policy should specify and standardize the running of DE Programmes in Nigeria.

The author recommended the development of a national policy on distance education, setting up of a commission to oversee and co-ordinate distance education programmes and the extension of DE Programmes to primary and secondary school levels. DE is supposed to serve a widely diversified clientele and Nigeria distance education should be made to do so.

Conclusively, my research contributions in the area of quality in higher distance education in Nigeria show that higher distance education institutions in Nigeria integrate quality assurance measures in their programmes to a great extent. Hence, their programmes and output are as qualitative as those of the conventional programmes. However, in areas where my contributions show deficiencies, distance education institutions must take a cue to redress those areas for greater quality. It has to be emphasised that quality is an incremental process; there is no end to quality provision in an educational programme. It is therefore expected that distance education

institutions should work towards improving and sustaining their quality assurance strategies in order to maintain the production of quality graduates that can compete effectively with their counterparts from conventional programmes.

Distance Education Media and Quality in Adult Education Programmes

In line with Morrison's (1990) characterization of adaptive learning system, Nwizu (2001) opines that distance education methodology is an adaptive learning system for quality adult education programme because it is an open system, learner-centered, change-focused and technologically mediated. However, she further observes that DE methodology while providing adaptive learning in adult education, is faced with many challenges, which include high cost of IT, mystifying the effectiveness of IT in adult distance education programmes, constant influx and selection of media and adverse effect of IT on adults due to over dependence. In filling the above gaps, the researcher suggested the use of simple and cost effective technologies and joint ownership of IT. She finally called for caution in the use of complex technologies because some of them may not be user friendly.

Open education is an educational process which can be effectively adopted in promoting quality and flexibility in adult learning. In view of this, Nwizu (2005) conducted a survey to examine the needed role of open education technologies in the independent study of adult learners. The administrative, teaching and evaluation roles were studied. It was found out that for quality administration of independent study for adult learners, open education technologies must provide, store and disseminate administrative data easily. The study further reported that for quality adult education, open technologies must perform teaching functions which range from effective instruction of learners to providing interaction, counseling service and reinforcement. With respect to evaluative function, open education technologies must provide participatory and immediate functions; it must provide immediate feedback and grade evaluation without delay. The study therefore recommended an integrative approach to selection and utilization of open education technologies. The selected IT must offer interactivity, visual advantage and unlimited access to informative and educative materials.

Nwizu, (2000) identified inadequate funds, unsuitable time for programme, fatigue, farm work, caring for children and aged parents, uncooperative husbands and teachers, trekking distance, rigidity of classroom and language of instruction as factors that inhibit the effective participation

of women in adult education programmes. However, because distance education takes education to their doorstep the respondents were optimistic that Distance Education as an alternative mode will improve their participation since they will be left with more time to take care of their responsibilities. The researcher recommended the setting up of pilot projects for literacy at a distance to conduct an initial assessment of the impact of Distance Education in improving the participation of women in literacy programme.

Nwizu (2000) reported that the major factors that inhibit the use of Distance Education media in conscientizing rural adults for community development include; unavailability of television, newspaper and electricity, unsuitable broadcast time, poor reception, illiteracy and non interactive nature of some DE media. It was also found out that formation of TV listening groups will be of immense importance in adopting media for conscientization of rural dwellers. Nwizu (1997 & 2002), therefore, recommended the formation of rural press and TV and radio listening groups for effective conscientization of rural adults for community development.

Nwizu (2005 & 2008) investigated the challenges faced by woman in distance education programmes and as women retirees. It was discovered that the challenges faced by women in distance education are infrastructural, interactive, economic, technological and social in nature. On the other hand the women retirees identified a barrage of challenges which are economic, physiological, health related and socio-cultural. Nevertheless the researcher found out that distance education has significant role to play in ameliorating the identified challenges. The researcher recommended a multimedia approach in addressing the identified challenges of women. The adopted media should help equip the women with information, skills and knowledge that are life related which they can utilize to reduce the effect of the identified challenges.

Nwizu (2004) raised pertinent issues that may hinder the use of Distance Education methodology in the creation of a knowledge based economy for adults. These issues are as follow; generation of knowledge, access to and the utilization of knowledge, training and retraining of qualified and adaptable labour force, quality assurance in the training of personnel and financing of infrastructure. However, the following potentials and solutions were identified in ameliorating the issues raised through distance education. They include; adequate access to ICTs, greater

access to knowledge, opportunity for lifelong learning, sponsoring researches and cost efficiency.

Assessing Quality Assurance Policies and Systems in Higher Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria: The Concerns to be Addressed

Quality assurance in Nigeria Distance Education raises some concerns and issues that need to be addressed for more qualitative delivery of programmes. These include:

Types of Faculty in Distance Education Programmes:

Most Distance Education institutions in Nigeria use part-time faculty in the delivery of their programmes. Apart from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) which has full-time lecturers, all the other institutions, especially dual mode institutions, run their programmes using part-time lecturers. This has implications for quality assurance. It does not give clear information on student/staff ratio and adequate attention is not given to Distance Education programmes since they are not the major source of faculty's income. Assessment, lectures and results are delayed. Implementation process is treated as second rate with greater attention given to conventional programmes which are the major reason for faculty's recruitment.

Distance education institutions rely heavily on full time conventional lecturers for the design of course materials. Although, these lecturers are experts in their fields and can provide quality content but they are not comprehensively trained for the development of course material. It is also true that it will be cheaper for the institution to use her already employed staff in the design of the materials, sometimes they do not deliver the course materials on time due to pressure of work. This affect timelines set by such institution in the delivery of course materials to students. The quality of DE Programmes are at stake given the above scenario.

Who Assesses Distance Education Programmes?:

There is need to critically evaluate the caliber of lecturers used in assessing Distance Education programmes in Nigeria. The question is 'Are they grounded in the principles of distance education'? Obviously no, most of the lecturers involved in the accreditation process of distance

education programmes are not experts in distance education. Rather, they are lecturers from conventional institutions who are not versatile with the rudiments and best practices in distance education. Their outputs in the quality process are usually limited.

Funding Issue

Funding is another strong issue in quality assurance of DE programmes in particular and DE institutions in general. If DE institutions are not properly funded, inadequate funds will not be allocated for assuring quality. Aina (2007) observes that inadequate funding of universities has, no doubt, has calamitous effect on teaching and research; and universities have been found to embark on income generating projects in order to source funds. DE programmes in Nigeria are not left out in this regards. NOUN News Bulletin (2012) reported that the amount appropriate to the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in 2011 was N498,800,000 while the actual amount released was 337,000,000 naira leaving a shortfall of 161,800,000 naira and this represents 67.7% of the appropriated fund. The bulletin further reported that in 2012, the amount appropriated was 411,000,000 naira and 1115,000,000 naira was released, leaving a balance of 296,000,000 naira. This represents 23% of the total appropriated funds. It is pertinent to note that for quality DE programmes, there is need for adequate funding to enable institutions develop quality and result-oriented programmes.

Furthermore, most dual mode DE Institutions set-up DE programmes for financial purposes. In a dwindling economy such as Nigeria, universities face economic stagnation as a result of limited allocation of funds to them. In a bid to generate funds internally most conventional universities set up DE programmes. Under this situation, quality is compromised. Course developments are haphazardly done and revaluation of course materials remain static. There is need to address this issue if quality is to be maintained in Nigeria DE programmes.

Closely related to income generation, management of DE finances by central institutional administration in a dual mode institution, has negative implication for quality. Most dual mode institutions set up DE Programmes for income generation. The income so generated is not ploughed back into the programmes for better quality. Rather they are invested in the running of conventional programmes. According to Commonwealth of Learning (2001), in instances where they discussed finances with directors of distance education units, there seems to be no correlation between the income generated by distance education programmes and the income

they received from university financial departments. This has negative implication for quality and growth of distance education provision and can undermine the sustainability of such programmes.

What Criteria should be adopted for DE Quality Assurance?

Adopting the same criteria in the accreditation of all Nigerian universities, irrespective of type, is a major issue in quality assessment of DE programmes. The Basic Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) document provides the benchmark for evaluation of Nigerian universities. It stipulates the minimum standard which all universities must attain in the areas of staffing, library, physical facilities, funding and employee rating. To receive full accreditation, each institution must score 70% in each of these specified areas and a grand score of 70% for the entire programme. These criteria may not completely fit into DE programmes because of their unique qualities. When these criteria are used in evaluating the quality of DE programme they create problems for the institutions and this is an issue that needs to be resolved since it creates a hurdle in the accreditation of DE programmes.

What Benchmarks and Indicators should be adopted for Quality Assurance?

Related to the above, is that the issues of benchmarks and quality indicators are not clear and explicit. There is need to develop benchmarks and indicators that will make assessments objective and clearly attainable. General statements are made without clear indicators of its achievement. For example, 'The institution has effective student support services'. This benchmark statement does not clearly specify the indicators that constitute effective student support services, what criteria measures the effectiveness and what level of performance is adequate. The indicators must be made specific to avoid ambiguity which may arise with individual interpretation.

Policy Issue

As at today, there is no discreet policy on distance education in Nigeria. Policy guidelines on distance education can only be found as a component of policy on Higher education. It is true that distance education institutions have their individual policies but this is not sufficient for uniformity in distance education implementation in Nigeria. Educational policies are meant to guide the overall activities of institutions and programmes. Where they are not available, it has

implications for quality guidelines. The non-existence of a national policy on distance education is an issue to be addressed if quality is to be ensured in Nigerian distance education programme.

Redefining Quality Assurance Mechanisms to Suit Borderless Instruction:

The emergence and growth of e-learning is a concern in assuring quality in distance education. Assuring quality in onsite programmes is easier because the assessors know where and how to gather the needed information. However, when Distance Education programmes are borderless and students have access to Open Education Resources (OER), to what extent will the provider be held responsible for the quality of materials accessed by the learner? The quality of the programme in the home country can be accredited but what becomes of the same programme being offered abroad? Should the quality assurance team also visit overseas site? What will be the cost implication and will the same benchmarks and indicators be applicable in overseas site or is there need to develop and adopt an international benchmark and indicators? The adoption of online learning is generating more diverse issues that need to be addressed if qualitative programmes will be achieved.

Limited Access to quality and Interactive Technologies

Lack of adequate access to Information and Communication Technology facilities, has implications for quality DE Programmes. Quality DE Programmes requires a multi-media approach to instruction. It is unfortunate that majority of Nigerian DE Programmes do not have access to a wide variety of ICT facilities. They are greatly dependent on printed material. Even online programmes are based on developed modules which are customized by service providers on laptops. There is limited interaction because of non-accessibility of interactive ICT. This situation impinges on the quality DE Programmes in Nigeria

Quality Enhancement in Distance Education Programme in Nigeria: Recommendations on New Perspectives

Recruitment and Training of Quality Personnel

Distance Education institutions should recruit their own full-time staff who must be qualified and experienced in the principles of distance education. This will make the staff more committed to the course of DE programmes rather than treating the programmes as second to conventional

programmes. Where DE Institutions use staff from conventional programmes who are not grounded in the principles of distance education, they must go through extensive training for quality implementation. The Institution must plan and implement at intervals training programmes for their staff to get them grounded and also keep them abreast of recent developments in the field of distance education.

Development of DE course materials requires special expertise. It is recommended that only people with such expertise should be used by DE institutions to assure quality in the materials. It is only when people with such expertise could not be found that inexperienced people can be used and extensive training given to them for effectiveness. They should be trained on the development of quality course materials before they are involved in instructional development.

Policy Development

The Federal Government and DE institutions should clearly develop a set of policies and structures to direct institutional activities for enhanced quality. A section of the National Policy on Education should be devoted to Open and Distance Education. This will help standardize the quality of programmes provided by distance education institutions. Furthermore, distance education institutions must clearly and explicitly develop their policies and quality assurance policies/frameworks to facilitate qualitative implementation of their programmes.

Integration of Interactive Information and Communication Technology

Nigeria Distance Education Universities must integrate modern ICTs into their instructional process. Over dependence on print media is outdated and the use of customized materials on laptops does not provide the needed interactivity and flexibility in distance education. Interactive communication technologies should be integrated into Nigeria distance education programmes because of their roles in delivery of quality programmes. Internet facilities must be made available to students to enable them establish interactivity during instruction and access materials for provision of quality distance education.

The Federal Government should increase access to interactive ICTs through enactment of policies and tax rebates laws that will help reduce the cost of ICTs. Access to ICT facilities and effective utilization of such will enhance the quality of distance education in Nigeria. The House

of Assembly should sponsor bills that will facilitate access and use of Information and Communication Technologies in distance education programmes.

Collaboration among Distance Education Institutions

Synergy and collaboration is recommended among DE programmes in Nigeria and beyond. This will make for quality assurance and sharing of ideas. Strategies and facilities for such collaboration and networking will enhance global partnership. With collaboration distance education institutions in Nigeria will have access to best practices and jointly develop and utilize quality materials/facilities for quality enhancement.

Setting up of Distance Education Commission

Considering the rate at which DE programmes are taking the centre stage in higher education provision, there should be a strategic and vibrant framework for evaluation and monitoring of the entire distance education programmes. This will help to foster both internal and external quality assurance. It is, therefore, recommended that the Federal Government set up a commission to oversee and coordinate DE programmes in Nigeria. The commission should monitor the implementation of policies by DE institutions and see to the disbursement of funds to these institutions. It should also ensure that substantial funds generated in dual mode institutions through DE are reinvested into DE programmes by the central administration for quality assurance.

Adequate Funding of Distance Education Programmes

Federal Government and DE institutions must strive to adequately fund DE programmes to ensure quality. DE requires huge investment to enable the providers function independent of government owned facilities. Private sector participation is also recommended to effectively fund quality DE programmes in Nigeria.

Provision of Student Support Services and Infrastructural Facilities

Distance Education Institutions and Federal Government should ensure student support services and infrastructural facilities are adequately provided at the study centers. It is suggested that the

government should set up a framework that will ensure the provision of these facilities before institutions can commence a programme.

Conducting Feasibility Study Prior to Establishment

Institutions should not hastily decide on setting up of DE Programmes due to economic reasons. For them to develop and implement quality programmes, institutions must conduct feasibility study through Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) Analysis. An objective SWOT Analysis of an institution gives the institution the opportunity to analyse their potentials in providing and sustaining quality DE Programme. The institution must objectively consider her strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This will place it on a sound footing to take a proper decision that will lead to the provision of quality DE Programme.

Future Research Effort

A study of the current trend in Nigeria higher distance education programme shows that Nigeria universities are setting up e-learning centres. Four universities in Nigeria recently established e-learning centres and are trying to overcome the initial challenges of institutional development. This I believe will heighten the argument on the quality of the programmes delivered by these institutions as a result of the following:

- The level of infrastructural development in Nigeria
- The level of funding of educational programmes by the government
- Access to interactive ICTs and the internet facilities especially at the different locations of the students

My future research effort will hinge on monitoring the e-learning programmes of Nigeria universities to determine the quality of the programmes delivered and the quality of the graduates. The findings of the researches will aim at quality improvement and not for judgmental purposes.

Conclusion

The inability of conventional institutions to provide higher education to deserving Nigerians has made distance education inevitable. Distance education, therefore, has granted unlimited access to higher education through its programmes and strategies. The establishment of both single and

dual mode distance education institutions in Nigeria and the subsequent increase in access to higher education has created doubts among critics as to the quality of the programmes. This doubt further has a spill-over effect on the acceptability of distance education graduates in the labour market. This lecture critically reviewed the quality status of distance education programmes in Nigeria and established the fact that distance education programmes are as qualitative as conventional programmes. However, distance education institutions should strive to increase and sustain the quality of their programmes, since quality is an incremental process. I, therefore, urge critics of distance education programmes and employers of labour to fully accept distance education programmes and graduates the same way as they accept conventional programmes and graduates. Distance education programmes are equally qualitative. This is the message of this lecture.

Mr Vice-Chancellor Sir, esteemed audience, this is where I bring this lecture to a close. Thank you for giving me your time and patience.

Acknowledgements

Mr. Chairman, may I crave your indulgence to appreciate and recognize in a special way, all those who in one way or the other, impacted on my academic career. My unalloyed gratitude goes to the Vice-Chancellor of this great University, Prof. Benjamin Ozumba, for making this inaugural lecture a reality. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I appreciate all you have been doing in terms of human and infrastructural development to make this citadel of learning a centre for excellence. Your vision of making this institution globally visible will never go unrealized. The Lord will continue to strengthen you and supply all your needs in this regards. Once more, i appreciate your efforts.

I humbly wish to acknowledge my parents late Pharm. Samuel and Dr. (Mrs) Mabel Ibeanu for their moral and financial support during my academic quest. I cannot sufficiently appreciate my mother for the unrelenting role she played in seeing me through my academics. Mama you are an Amazon. You are my eyes when I couldn't see. I, therefore, doff my hat for you. Even in the face of dwindling resources during the civil war, when many parents would have preferred to train their sons and give their daughters out in marriage, you made it clear that you would rather have your sons stay out of school than have your only daughter's education terminated. I thank

you immensely for the numerous sacrifices you made to have me where I am today. I regret that you are unable to be physically present at my inaugural lecture due to old age, but I know you are here with us in spirit. I pray that the Lord Almighty will continue to bless you with long life and good health. He will grant you all you desire in this period of your life and you will never lack.

My heartfelt and deepest appreciation goes to my beloved husband, Hon. Justice Frank Chukwuemeka Nwizu. Emmy, you showered me with love and care ever since we got married. I attained this status of professorship as a result of your support and encouragement. You trusted my sense of judgment in all circumstances and situations. Thanks for your encouragement, sacrifice, understanding and all round support to have me excel. You will continue to have my respect and humility as long as we live. May God grant you long life and good health to reap the fruit of your labour. This is my prayer for you.

I owe special thanks to my rare gifts from God; my children Ije, Ezy, Chu, Chi, Mekay and Chido; and my Sons-In-Law; Alozie, Chima, Nnamdi and Amobi; for their patience, care, understanding and support all through this professional journey. You brought joy and happiness into my life. Your calmness and gentle nature gave me the peace of mind and concentration I needed to rise within a reasonable period of time. May the Almighty God continue to uplift, protect and guide all of you. You will surely excel more than us; your parents.

I specially appreciate my grand children, Chuchu, Somsom and Kamsy. You are a great source of excitement, peace and gratitude to me. I love you all. My prayer is that you will continue to grow in the love, grace, peace and favour of God.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my siblings Professors Gordon and Okey Ibeanu together with their wives Dorothy and Dr. Vivienne as well as their children; Nnamdi, Nkiru, Chinedu, Adaeze and Chioma,. Thanks for your moral and financial support. During the early days of my career, Prof. Okey guided my path and whenever I had any encounter with my academic colleagues, he always gave me a perfect solution. As the youngest in the family and the only girl, my brothers treated me like a baby. Even in this old age, they have continued to support me financially, and otherwise. I will continue to cherish all of you. Remain richly blessed.

I greatly appreciate my in-laws, friends, aunts and cousins, among whom are, Sir Dr Nonso and Lady Prof Chika Oguonu, Mr Isaac Nwizu, Mr Nnamdi Nwizu, Ben Nwaizu (Bendusco), Chidozie Nwaizu, Fr. Francis Nwizu, Sir Gustavus and Lady Evelyn Chikwendu and Mrs Joy Emodi. I sincerely appreciate the Ibeanu family, the Nwizu family, the Ogbonna family, the Owunna family and the Nwachukwu family, for their support.

I wish to acknowledge the support I received from my Head of Department, Prof. C. I. Ore and my other colleagues in the Department, retired and in service; Prof. T.A. Ume, Prof. D.U. Egonu, Prof. P.N.C. Ngwu, DR. A. U. Nwobi, Dr. F. O. Mbagwu, Dr. U Ebirim, Dr. Okide, Dr. O. Nwabuko, Dr. M. Agboeze and Dr. K. Obetta. I specially appreciate my academic children in the Department; Dr. R. Nwachukwu, Dr. C. Olori, Dr. B. Ogu, Mr. C. Onwuadi, Mr. P. M. D. Okeke, Mr. K. Ogbonnaya, Miss E. Okop, Miss C. Ugwunnadi, Mr. I. Okafor, Mrs. A. Koledoye, Mrs. C. Imo and Mrs. E. Ekwealor. You still have my support anytime, anywhere. Ruphina, Christian and Bala, I cannot thank you enough for your untiring effort to see that this inaugural lecture is perfected. I am indeed grateful.

My supervisor Prof J.D.C. Osuala of blessed memory is worthy of special mention. It touches my heart that you are not around today to witness a seed you sowed and nurtured grow to maturity. However, God knows the best since our entire being depends on Him. My prayer is that you continue to rest in the bosom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My sincere gratitude goes to the following persons who have proved to be friends indeed. They are the immediate past Dean of the Faculty of Education and the Dean of Student Affairs, Prof. Uju Umo, Prof. S.A. Ezeudu, Prof. Ike Ifelunni, Dr. E. Umeifekwem, Prof. Nkeokelonye, Dr. O. O. Nwubani, Ven. C.A. and Dr. Kay Onyechi, Prof Ben Ogwo, Mr and Mrs Alex Nzei, Mr Vin Ekwelem, Mr and Mrs Ifeanyi Okoye, Prof E. Osinem, Prof. R. Osuji, Prof. Depo Akintayo, Prof Kola Kazeem and Prof Usiwoma Enuke.

My post graduate students especially my PhD graduates deserve my recognition for their contribution towards my academic success. Thanks for your solidarity and presence.

To the entire members of the Faculty of Education, I say thanks so very much, for your support to my quest for the deanship position. You elected me your Dean for the next two years. I promise that I will never disappoint you. Thanks for believing in me and thanks for your

presence at this August occasion. Together we shall pilot the affairs of the faculty and together we shall succeed. Long Live the Faculty of Education!!!.

I thank immensely all the non-teaching staff of the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies and the Dean's office, Faculty of Education for their encouragement. I thank most especially Mrs Ukpai, Mr Don Ezeugwu, Ms N. Akujim and Favour for typing the lecture. Remain Blessed.

I appreciate the presence of the Sweet Sisters in Christ Association, Nnewi Community Association, Nsukka Branch, members of Nnewi Students' Congress (NSC) and Education Students' Association (ESA).

I am thankful to the members of the Senate Ceremonials Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. Ken Oforkansi. Thanks for organizing this inaugural lecture.

I thank everybody here present for finding time to be at this inaugural lecture. What would I have done without you? Your presence added colour and value to this occasion. I thank you all and wish you God's abundant grace and blessings in all your endeavours. For those who travelled to share in my joy, I wish you journey mercies as you travel back to your various destinations. Peace.

Finally, to Him that uplifts, the Creator of all things, the I AM THAT I AM, the Alpha and Omega, in whom our being is made perfect, I say receive all honor, glory, adoration, excellence and majesty. Amen

References

- ADEA (1998). *Tertiary Distance Learning in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Toronto: Roberts and Associates
- Aina .O. (2007). Alternative Modes of Financing Higher Education in Nigeria and Implications for University Governance, in Babalola and Emunewu (eds). *Issues in Higher Education: Revised Edition*, Lagos: Bolabay Publications.
- Ajadi, T.O, Salawu, I.O and Adeoye F.A. (2008). E-learning and Distance Education in Nigeria. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational technology – TOJET*. 7(4) Article 7 October 2008. pp 61-70.
- American Society for Quality (2008) Glossary on Quality. Retrieved 20/07/2008.

Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (2007) Quality Issues in Distance Learning. USA: AACSB International.

Bates, T. (2013). Course design and Material Development Guide. Johannesburg: SAIDE

Belawati and Zuhairi (2007) The Practice of a Quality Assurance system in Open and Distance Learning : A case study of Universitas Terbuka Indonesia (The Indonesia Open University) International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning 8(1) pp 1-15.

Bhola, H.S (1989). Overview of Distance Education Handbook for Designing and Writing Distance Education Materials. Gachuhu and Matiru (eds) Bonn: German Foundation for International Development Education.

Clark R.E. (1975). Constructing Taxonomy of Media Attributes for Research Purpose. *AV. Communication Review* 24(2) 197-215

Crosby, P (1979) Quality is free. New York: McGraw – Hill ISBN 0-07-014512-1.

Commonwealth of Learning (1999) Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning. Training Toolkit Vancouver: The Commonwealth of learning.

Commonwealth Of Learning (2001). Building Capacity to Deliver Distance Education in Nigeria. Report Prepared for the World Bank Canada: Vancouver. August.

Curran .C. (1990). Factors Affecting the Cost of Media in Distance Education in Bates A.W. (ed) *Media and Technology in European Distance Education*. Keynes: Open University Press.

Daniel, J. (2005). Extraordinary Education for Ordinary People. Endowment Lecture at the Netaji Subash West Bengal Open University (April 15) Kolkata. Downloaded from <http://www.col.org/speeches/5D0504NSWBOU.htm>

European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) (2009). Standards and Guideline for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Helsinki, Finland: European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 3rd Edition.

Fallshaw. E and McNaught. C (2005). Quality Assurance Issues and Processes Relating to ICT-Based Learning. In Fallows, S.T. and Bhanot, R. (eds) Quality Issues in ICT-based Higher Education New York: Routledge Falmer.

Gunadasa, G.M.N. (2007) ICT in Education Policies in Sri Lanka: Challenges and Opportunities Paper Presented at the e-Global Leaders Conference, Seoul, Korea 19-20th September.

- Haddad Wali D. (2007). ICTs for Education: A Reference Hand Book
<http://www.ictinedtoolkit.org>, <http://mw/hpic.NECTEC/th/PNC> downloaded August 2010.
- Harasin, I., Hutz, S.R, Teles, L. and Turoff, M. (1995). *Learning Networks: A Field Guide to Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Harvey .L. and Green .D. (1993). Defining Quality. Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education 18(1) 9-34
- Holberg .B. (1995). *Theory and Practice of Distance Education*. London: T.J Press.
- Howes .B. (1983). Library Services to External Students. *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* (14) 85-90
- Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) (2000) Quality on the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet Based Distance Education. Washington DC: IHEAP downloaded <http://www.ihep.com/pub/DDF/Quality.pdf> 25th August 2016.
- Jegede. O. (2000). Evaluating a National Policy on Distance Education: An Agenda for Implementation. Education Today Quaterly, Dec. (8)3
- Jegede O.J. (2003). Taking the Distance out of Higher Education in 21st Century Nigeria. Paper Presented at the Convocation and 10th Anniversary Celebration of Federal Polytechnic Oko.
- Jung, i. (2005). Quality Assurance Survey of Mega Universities. In C, McIntosh (Ed) Perspectives on Distance Education: Lifelong Learning and Distance Higher Education. Commonwealth of Learning/UNESCO p79-96.
- Kaye .A. (1988). Distance Education: The State of the Art. Prospects Quarterly Review of Education XVIII (I)
- King J. W, Nugent G.C, Eich J.J, Mlineck D.L and Russell E.B. (2015). A Policy Framework for Distance Education: A Case Study and Model downloaded from www.fgse.nova.edu/dll/policy-framework.doc.
- Latchen C. (2012). Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open and Distance Non-Formal Education. Vancouver, Canada: Commonwealth of Learning.
- Mishra, P. & Koehler, M.J. (2006) Technological Pedagogical content Knowledge: A Framework for Teacher Knowledge. Downloaded on 25th August 2016 from punya.educ.msu.edu/publication/journal.../mishra-koehler-tcr2006.pdf
- Mkpa, M.A. (1994). Appraisal in Distance Education in C.Nnaka (ed) *Distance Education in Contemporary Nigeria*. Oko: School of Distance Education

Moemeka .A. (1983). Radio in Non-Formal Education – A Search for an Appropriate Strategy
NNCAE Conference Paper, ACON, Badagry, Lagos.

National Open University of Nigeria (2012) National Open University of Nigeria News Bulletin.
Lagos:NOUN 12(1)

National Population Commission (2007). Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette 4(94)
Titled

Legal notice on population of the 2006 census report.

Nwizu, S. C. (1997). A critical analysis of retirement education needs of female teachers in
Nigeria. *Journal of adult education studies*. (1) 2.

Nwizu, S. C. (1997). Motivating factors of distance education students and their perception of
their instructional mode in Enugu state. *CARESON journal of research and
development* (1) 1.

Nwizu, S.C.(1998). Distance education and manpower development: a reflection. *Review of
education*.(xv) 1.

Nwizu, S.C. & Ebirim, U..N. (1998). Factors inhibiting effective functioning of the extra-
mural unit of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *CARESON journal of research
and development*. (2) 1.

Nwizu, S. C. (1998). Access to credit facilities. In Omolewa, M. & Fadeyi, T. (eds.) *Post
literacy material development in Africa*. Ibadan: UNIVA.

Nwizu, S.C. (2000). Improving the participation of women in literacy programme: distance
education, an alternative approach,. In Ali, A. & Okeke, E. (eds.) *Information
technology and education*. University of Nigeria: Institute of Education.

Nwizu, S. C. (2001). Perception of NTI students on the effectiveness of tutor-interaction in
distance education, *African journal of education*. (6) 2.

Nwizu, S.C. (2001). In search of a suitable methodology for adult education: the role of distance
education through information technology. *International journal of educational
research* (5).

Nwizu, S. C. (2002) Using media in conscientizing rural adults for community development.
Journal of adult education and development . (1) 1.

- Nwizu, S. C. and Ekwelem, V. O. (2002). Accessibility and factors inhibiting effective use of information media by adult learners in the democratization of knowledge. *International journal of arts and technology education* (2) 1.
- Nwizu S.C. (2003). Availability and utilization of media for distance education programmes of Nigerian universities. *Journal of world council for curriculum and instruction (WCCI) Nigerian chapter forum* (4) 1
- Nwizu, S. C. (2003). The relevance of open distance learning to university education in Nigeria. *The Nigerian journal of industrial relations and labour relations* (6) 1&2
- Ekwelem, V.O. and Nwizu, S.C. (2003). Improving access to library services for distance learners: perception of national teachers institute (NTI) students. *Journal of liberal studies* (11) 1 and 2
- Nwizu, S. C. (2004). Effective administration of tertiary distance education in Nigeria. *Journal of adult education and development*. (2) 2
- Nwizu, S. C. (2004) Developing knowledge-based societies: challenges for tertiary distance education and distance educators. *Health and movement education journal*. (8) 1
- Nwizu, S. C. and Ekwelem, V. O. (2004). Distance education and information technology in the new millennium. *Journal of research in education*. (3) 1.
- Nwizu, S. C. (2005). Challenges and strategies in the distance education of women. *Journal of adult education and development*. (3) 1
- Nwizu, S.C. (2005). Analysis of internet skill acquisition and utilisation among tertiary distance learners in Nigeria. *CARESON journal of research and development* (4) 1
- Nwizu, S.C (2005). Expected roles of open education technologies in the independent study of adult and non-formal education participants. Adult and non-formal Education in Nigeria. NNCAE
- Nwizu, S.C. (2006) Assessing the effectiveness of media resource utilisation in curriculum implementation for distance learners. *International journal of educational research*. 1(1)
- Nwizu, S.C. (2006) Achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) in Nigeria through information and communication technologies: *Adult Education in Nigeria*. 11
- Nwizu, S.C. (2006) Assessing the quality of staff and staff development programmes in tertiary distance education programmes of Nigerian universities. *Journal of Education in Developing Areas* (JEDA) 15(2).

- Nwizu, S.C. (2007). Expanding Learning Opportunities for Adults through Distance Education. *Adult Education in Nigeria*.(14)
- Nwizu, S.C. (2007) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills for Effective Networking and Administration of Distance Education (DE) Programmes. In Flolu, E.I., Dzansi-McPalm M.P. and Awoyemi, M.O. (Eds). Education in Ghana: Challenges for the 21st Century. Winneba: University of Education. Vol. 2
- Nwizu, S.C. (2008). Adequacy of student support services in distance education programmes of two Nigerian universities: implications for distance education administrators. *International Journal of Educational Research* 8
- Nwizu, S.C. (2008). The role of distance education (DE) institutions in ameliorating the
- Nwizu, S.C. (2008). Analysis of ICT usage in Information Generation and Dissemination by Distance Education Participants: Implications for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria. In Boucouvalas, M & Aderinoye, R. (eds) Education for Millennium Development. Vol. II
- Nwizu, S.C. and Ekwelem, V.O (2008). Providing access to education in the globalization era: potentials of distance education through ICT and virtual library. In Nworgu, B.G. (ed) Education in the information age: Global challenges and enhancement strategies.
- Nwizu, S.C (2010). Attaining the millennium development goals (MDGs) in Nigeria through distance education (DE): opportunities and needed reforms. *Journal of adult education and development*. 4(1)
- Nwizu, S.C. (2010). Networking for lifelong learning and development in Africa: Implications for distance learning technologies. *Journal of Nigerian Educational Research Association*. 15(1).
- Nwizu, S.C. (2011). Implementing internal quality assurance strategies by distance education institutes of Nigerian universities: perception of distance education staff. *International Journal of Educational Research* 11(1).
- Nwizu, S.C. (2015) Application of Value Chain Analysis in the Sustainable Management of Tertiary Distance Education Programmes in Nigeria. *International Journal of Management and Sustainability*. 4(5) 104-113
- Ojokheta, K.O. (2010). Reflections on Policies and Practice of ODL in Nigeria: Towards a Renewed Invigoration. *Malaysian Journal of Distance Education* 12(1) 77-93.
- Oladokun S.O. and Oyewumi O.O. (1999). *Coping with the Tiranny of Library Services at a Distance: A Typical African Case*. *Pan Common Wealth Forum on Learning*. Vancouver:

Commonwealth of Learning.

- Olojede, A.A (2008) Issues and Challenges in Enhancing Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria, Paper Presented at the Fifth Pan Commonwealth Forum for Open Learning (Pcf5) in London (13-17 July 2008).
- Omeje .J. (2004). Strategies for Effective Administration of Guidance and Counseling Services as Perceived by School Counselors in Nsukka Education Zone. *Journal of Adult Education and Development (JAED)* 2(2) 198-206
- Omeje, J.C. and Nwizu, S.C. (2007). Effectiveness of counseling services in the adjustment of distance education students. *Sokoto Review of Education* 9(1).
- Open University (1992). *The Student Handbook*. London: Spottiswood Ballantyne Ltd.
- Perraton .H. (1991). *Administrative Structures for Distance Education*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat/Commonwealth of Learning.
- Rahman, M.H. (2006) Developing course material in Open and Distance Learning: BOU Perspective. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 7(4) pp55-60 July
- Reichert, S. (2008) Looking back – Looking forward: Quality assurance and the Bologna Process. In A. Beso, L. Bollaert, B. Curvale, H.T. Jensen, L. Harvey, E. Helle, B. Maguire, A. Mikkola and A. Sursock (Eds), *implementing and Using Quality Assurance: Strategy and Practice* Brussels, Belgium: The European University Association (pp 5-10)
- Reiser, R and Gagne, R.M. (1983). *Selected Media for Instruction*. Englewood Cliffs: Education Technology Publication.
- Schramm .W. (1977). *Big Media, Little Media*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Seel, B and Glasgow, Z (1998). *Making Instructional Design Decisions*, Second Edition. Upper Saddle River: Prentice – Hall.
- Shabani, J and Okebukola P (2001). *Guide to the Development of Materials for Distance Education*. Ibadan: Olu – Akin Printing Press.
- Thorpe .M. (1988). *Evaluating Open and Distance Learning*. Harlow: Longman.
- Tong J.Y. (1994). Managing Tutors in Distance Education. *Ault Education and Development* 42, 113-122
- Ukeje .B.O. (1994). Standards in Distance Education in Nwaka .C. (ed) *Distance Education in Contemporary Nigeria*. Oko: School of Distance Education.

University of Lagos (1998) Newsletter. Lagos: Distance Learning Institute. August.

Unwin, L. (1994). I'm a Real Student Now: The Importance of Library Access of Distance Learning Students. *Journal for Further and Higher Education* 18(1) 85-91