

Enhancing Open and Distance Learning Capacity Building in SADC Region: The Role and Influence of SADC Centre of Specialisation in Open and Distance Learning in Teacher Education

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***Abstract:** Following the decolonisation and the disintegration of apartheid in the African continent, the new African leadership looked upon higher education as a panacea for socio-economic development of the continent. This called for the African leadership to transform higher education from an “elite” to “mass” education. The new realities of independence in the SADC region necessitated the need to widen access and equity in higher education. This need led to the launching and signing of SADC Protocol on Education and Training in 1997 by the Heads of States. The Protocol recognises ODL as a vehicle for expanding access and equity in higher education for non-conventional learners and trainees. This paper examines the role and the influence the SADC Centre of Specialisation in ODL plays in enhancing and buttressing the achievement of the spirit and the aspirations of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training.*

Key words: Open and distance learning, SADC, Centre of Specialisation in Open and Distance Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The poverty situation in Africa is worrying. Reports show that four out of 10 Africans live in absolute poverty and... that poverty is on the increase (Ayittey, 2002:57). One fundamental question that is often asked in local, regional and global fora is: “Why is Africa poor or why is Africa the least developed region of the Third World? and “How will Africa recovery from this situation?” (World Bank, 2000a, & Ayittey, 2002).

Strategies to address the miserable continental situation have been formulated and put in place at various levels.

- **National level:** Each country has developed national poverty reduction strategies
- **Regional level:** Regional economic blocks such as SADC have region-wide strategies
- **Continental level:** New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) primary objective is poverty reduction. Its programmes range from agriculture to e-school.
- **Global level:** At the global level, we have Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

All these poverty reduction strategies are anchored on the provision of quality education and training or the development of high calibre of human capital. The promotion and the development of ODL is therefore to be seen in this context.

CONTINENTAL CHALLENGES

The challenges of socio-economic development of Africa can be attributed broadly to both the past and the present situations.

The Past Realities

The attribution of all the causes of Africa's crisis to the past has been referred to by the scholars of post colonial studies as "externalists view". This is a situation where we in the African continent blame all our forces of underdevelopment to *inter alia*:

Colonial and policy of divide and rule; Effects of slave trade; Racism and sexism; Exploitation by multinational corporations; Inadequate flows of foreign aid; and Poor terms of trade. Others are: Provision of limited higher education opportunities by the colonial and apartheid regimes and Colonial destruction of indigenous technological development.

While these factors have had a long-term effects on the socio-economic development they are not the primary cause.

The Present Realities

Following the decolonization of the African continent the new realities that faced the new African leadership included the need to transform the colonial elite education system to mass education, expand education at all levels, and remove access barriers and improve equity. These new realities put pressure on African universities to enhance access, relevance, equity and quality (World Bank, 2000a). According to the World Bank (2000a: 16) the new realities necessitated the need to widen access to higher education:

Initially, newly independent countries, and poor countries more generally, looked to their higher education systems to deliver support for national efforts to raise standards of living and alleviate poverty. They also attempted to widen access to higher education...help make societies more democratic, while strengthening human right.

It is now over 45 years, since most African countries, except South Africa, got their independence, and yet the socio-economic development has not improved much. Indeed, Africa entered the 21st Century as one of the poorest continents. In a provocative publication entitled "*Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?*" the World Bank (2000b) said yes, but a qualified yes.

Yes it can if it adheres to the following prescription: Improved governance and resolution of internal conflicts; invest in education and health; increase competitiveness and diversify economies; reduce aid dependency and strengthen partnerships. In other words, the World Bank is telling us that the causes of our underdevelopment are more related to our internal factors than our skewed perception of external factors.

UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF ODL

One of the focus of this Conference is capacity building in ODL. A large number of factors that have influenced the development of other sub-sectors of education in Africa have also influenced the growth of ODL. With respect to ODL underdevelopment, the two major schools of thought are policy trap, and misguided national leadership.

Policy Trap

Policies that have guided the development of education in many Sub-Saharan African countries have been driven primarily by the donors led by the World Bank. The donors'

order of priorities in investment in education has been primary education, secondary education, conventional universities, and distance learning institutions.

After decades of investment concentration in primary education sub-sector in developing countries, the World Bank (2000a: 14 & 16) realised in late 1990s, that:

Higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development...The focus on primary education is important, but an approach that pursues primary education alone will leave societies dangerously unprepared for survival in tomorrow's world.

Misguided National Leadership

The system of governance has also largely contributed to the low and slow development of higher education, and ODL in particular. Two factors are notable here - military coup and civil wars. The decolonisation of Africa came with a heavy price, namely: The cost of fighting the colonizer, The cost of fighting for power by the African elites, and the cost of sustaining dictatorial leadership against the people's uprising.

The resultant effects of the fighting include *inter alia*:

- Increased poverty and illiteracy.
- Underdevelopment of education and infrastructure.
- Diversion of national resources and people's energies into non-productive services.
- Rising corruption. The former President of Zaire (now DRC) Mobutu attributed the rampant corruption in his country to western countries.

The magnitude of the resources lost through corruption in military ruled African countries have been quantified as follows (Costa, 2008):

- Nigeria: Out of an estimated US\$ 400 billion that Nigeria has lost through corruption since independence, US\$ 12 billion is alleged to have been stolen by Ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo alone.
- DRC: US\$ 3 to 5 billion alleged to have been stolen by Ex-President Mobutu.
- Liberia: US\$ 3 billion alleged to have been stolen by Ex-President Charles Taylor.

Table 1: Effects of Civil Wars on University Development

| Country | Effects |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The administration of University of Goma was taken over by anti-Mobutu rebels and hence denying the institution development resources from central government (SARUA, 2009). • University of Kisangani became a refugee camp following confrontations between Uganda and Rwandan forces fighting for control of mineral-rich city (SARUA, 2009). |
| Mozambique | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1962 and 1986, University of Eduardo was the only University in the country. Civil wars delayed the establishment of other universities. |
| Nigeria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Open University of Nigeria was closed by the military regime for 18 years (1985-2003). |
| Uganda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once highly renowned Makerere University suffered from brain drain, slumped student enrolment from the neighbouring countries, and infrastructural decay. • Delayed establishment of other universities. |

Suffering and the cost of maintaining internally displaced people

While the overall effect of the military coups and civil wars led to underdevelopment in all social and economic sectors, the unique features of this effect on the underdevelopment of higher education in selected countries are summarised in the Table 1.

Given already the disadvantageous position of ODL, it is clear that where the development of conventional institutions is delayed, ODL institutions are forgotten.

Political champions

In Africa, ODL lacks political champions to put forward to the public the importance of ODL. The noticeable political champions include the late Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, and Robert Mugabe. During the receipt of honorary degree from UNISA, Nelson Mandela (1999) observed that: *“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”*. Expressing the same sentiment during the receipt of honorary degree from OUT, the late Julius Nyerere (1999:6) observed that: *“Education should be an instrument of liberation”*.

SADC CHALLENGES

The African continent has five regional economic blocks and SADC with 15 Member States is largest. The countries that form SADC were ruled by various colonial powers, namely: Britain, Germany, Portugal, France, and Boers. Their level of development in all sectors including education at independence varied according to the level of development and exploitation by the former colonial regime. For example, at independence in 1975 national illiteracy rate in Mozambique was over 90% (SARUA, 2009) and not a single Mozambican in the country possessed a doctorate degree. The bond that brought these countries together is rooted on a common lengthy struggle for economic and political liberation.



The SADC vision and mission statements are stipulated as follows:

Vision

The SADC vision is: “one of a common future, a future in a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa. This

shared vision is anchored on the common values and principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the peoples of Southern Africa”.

Mission

The SADC mission is: "to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient productive systems, deeper co-operation and integration, good governance, and durable peace and security, so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international relations and the world economy". The pursuit of this mission is guided by the following principles, which are stated in Article 4 of the SADC Treaty:

- Sovereign equality of all Member States.
- Solidarity, peace and security.
- Human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.
- Equity, balance and mutual benefit.
- Peaceful settlement of disputes.

PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Participation in higher education as measured by gross enrollment ratio (GER) is relatively low in many SADC Members States when compared with the aggregate for the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The overall participation rate in higher education in SSA in 2008 was 5% (World Bank, 2008). This gross enrollment ratio figure of 5% in Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest of all the regions of the world. The situation in SADC between 2006 and 2008 is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Higher Education Participation in SADC Region

| Country | Gross Enrolment Ratio: % of relevant Age Group | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Secondary Education | Tertiary Education |
| Angola | 17* | 1* |
| Botswana | 75** | 5** |
| DRC | 22 ⁺ | 1 ⁺ |
| Lesotho | 37** | 4** |
| Malawi | 29** | 0 ^{a**} |
| Mauritius | 86** | 17** |
| Mozambique | 16** | 1** |
| Namibia | 57** | 6** |
| South Africa | 95** | 15** |
| Swaziland | 47** | 4** |
| Tanzania | 6 | 1** |
| Zambia | 36* | 2* |
| Zimbabwe | 36* | 4* |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | - | 5 |
| South Asia | - | 9 |
| East Asia & Pacific | - | 20 |
| Middle East & North Africa | - | 24 |
| Developed countries | - | 67 |

Source: World Bank (2008), World Development Indicators

* 2006 Figures from World Bank Africa Development Indicators.

** 2008 Figures from World Bank Development Indicators.

⁺Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) Handbook 2009

0^{a**} Less than 0.5%.

The variation in figures is explained in part by the definition of tertiary education. The Mauritius figures include wide range of post-secondary education institutions including universities. The South African figures are only for universities.

Three implications can be drawn from this level of participation in higher education in SADC region:

- Development of high calibre human capital is low.
- Less diversification of access routes to higher education, and
- Skewed education policies.

GENDER GAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The provision of tertiary and higher education in the SADC region was further marginalized by the limited allocation of beds for women in face-to-face programmes. In Malawi, for example, only a third of the number of places in many tertiary institutions and the University of Malawi were for women. In a 540 enrolment capacity teacher training college, 150 beds were for women while 390 were for men (MoEST, 2008). A similar trend was observed in boarding secondary schools which mixed boys and girls yet women comprise 51 percent of the national population (Republic of Malawi, 2010) and more girls than boys register in primary school lower classes (MoEST, 2009). The general situation in the SADC region is similar to what has been illustrated from the Malawi scenario. In trying to address this the protocol on gender and development states that member states would enact laws to promote equal access to education at all levels by 2015 (SADC, 2010).

In view of the limited boarding places, it has been difficult for some institutions to increase the number of female students without additional hostels for them. Others have tried to introduce non-residential admissions but such admissions favour men more than women because they increase vulnerability of women to all sorts of abuse due to lack of proper accommodation. In the end, more men than women are retained in higher education because women are unsafe in some rentable premises around the institutions. The face-to-face programmes have therefore continued to marginalize women even when opportunities for non-residential admissions are availed to them due to long distances from personal homes. Even when suitable houses for rent are available, most women found them too expensive because they usually have low income. These challenges support the use of ODL to reach out to women and extend their access to higher education at their own convenience and reasonable cost.

Globally, there have been notable increase of women in higher education due to increased secondary education but their participation in traditionally male dominated professions such as physical science and technology is still very small. Of great concern, is general lack critical mass of women in decision-making positions (UNESCO, 1998). This is a consequence of denying women opportunity for higher education which prepares people for decision-making positions. The need to empower women through equal access to higher education as their male counterparts does not emphasis if the current situation is to be addressed. UNESCO (1998) identified three key issues which must be dealt with to promote women decision-making participation and these are:

- Societal attitudes to women which discourage their participation in decision-making;
- Their lower enrolments in higher education to date (although here, patterns are rapidly changing in all regions); and
- The absence of a gender dimension in the higher education curriculum.

These issues must be dealt with to allow women to accede to leadership positions in higher education or in society in greater numbers. ODL becomes a handy tool for the empowerment of women who are working and aspire for decision-making positions. SADC has realized the potential of ODL to widen access of women in higher education as articulated in both the protocol on education and protocol on gender. The SADC ODL capacity building project supported by the African Development Bank is meant to facilitate an inclusive human capacity development to facilitate empowerment of women through education. The training workshops planned for the centre of specialization in teacher education will seek to contribute to women empowerment through training of ODL practitioners.

Though pervasive inequalities still exist between women and men in higher education in the SADC region, Member States have continued to implement affirmative actions in order to increase women's enrollment in higher education. These affirmative actions include *inter alia*:

- Admission of women into university programmes at lower points than male counterparts (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania).
- Introduction of access or bridging programmes in Mathematics and Sciences for women (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania).
- Establishment of women's Universities (Zimbabwe).

These efforts are still far from achieving equitable access in higher education between women and men in the SADC region. Recent study by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (2008), show that women are under-represented in different categories of academic staff in SADC region. The Table 3 below provides an overview of the disproportionate gender representation amongst the academic staff above the level of the senior lecturer in 10 SADC countries. Only 19.2% of the women are above this grade. Though the statistics from DRC are not available, women representation may be lower than in any SADC country. According SARUA (2009), women comprise slightly over 6% of academic staff at the University of Kinshasa.

Table 3: University Academic Staff Gender Representation in SADC Region

| Country | Women | as% | Men | as% | Unknown | as% | Total |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Lesotho | 46 | 34.3 | 77 | 57.5 | 11 | 8.2 | 134 |
| Malawi | 42 | 16.7 | 204 | 81.0 | 6 | 2.4 | 252 |
| Mauritius | 56 | 35.0 | 98 | 61.3 | 6 | 3.8 | 160 |
| Mozambique | 34 | 28.1 | 84 | 69.4 | 3 | 2.5 | 121 |
| Namibia | 48 | 34.0 | 91 | 64.5 | 2 | 1.4 | 141 |
| South Africa | 1,485 | 19.7 | 3,653 | 48.5 | 2,391 | 31.8 | 7,529 |
| Swaziland | 40 | 33.6 | 79 | 66.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 119 |
| Tanzania | 54 | 8.5 | 404 | 63.4 | 177 | 27.9 | 635 |
| Zambia | 40 | 10.0 | 266 | 66.7 | 93 | 23.3 | 399 |
| Zimbabwe | 64 | 14.5 | 263 | 59.3 | 115 | 26.0 | 442 |
| SADC | 1,909 | 19.2 | 5,219 | 52.5 | 2,804 | 28.2 | 9,932 |

Source: The Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2008, p.7-8

LEARNER SUPPORT FACTORS

Where ODL institutions, whether as single or dual modes, have been established, ODL learners experience much greater challenges than their counterparts in conventional institutions. Students' learning outcomes, whether for those on-campus or off-campus, are influenced by a number of internal and external factors. In an ODL context, these factors have been categorised and summarised by Carroll, Ng and Birch (2009) as:

- Institutional factors.
- Situational factors and
- Dispositional factors.

While situational and dispositional factors are difficult to control or harmonized for all distance learners, institutional factors as they relate to practices and policies can be controlled.

Institutional Factors

One area that has received and continues to receive considerable attention in institutional factors is learner support. Learner support is a multidimensional activity and hence has been defined and measured in terms of its constituents (Mitra, 2009). It is a major contributor to distance learners' low throughput and retention rate. It is not only guidance and counseling as most people think. Guidance and counseling is the smallest activity in learner support. Other major institutional components are ICT support, how study materials are prepared including clarity, examinations and quality of moderation, field and project supervision, feedback, etc.

As off-campus learners, ODL students are faced with a number of institution-based challenges that include *inter alia*:

- Quality, relevancy and appropriateness of study materials developed or borrowed from other institutions.
- Quantity and quality of tutor-learner face-to-face encounters.
- Availability and quality of online learning.
- Limitation of a variety of alternative learning opportunities such as video conferencing, radio, TV, and
- Delayed feedback on assignments and portfolios.

These institutional factors influence the throughput rate, retention, and the level of the learners' performance. Indeed, recent studies in a number of SADC countries show that the quality of the learner support continues to be a major concern and a drawback to the learners.

- *Botswana*: Up to 11% of the diploma teacher trainees in Botswana fail to complete their programme due to lack or poor project supervision (Kamau, 2010).
- *South Africa*: (i) Up to 44% of the UNISA learners attribute their failure in examinations to institutional factors such delayed receipt of study materials (Mabunda, 2010). (ii) Non-maximisation of ICT as a learner's support tool and low feedback from lecturers on assignments have been cited as some of the major contributors to learners' failure in UNISA (Risenga, 2010).
- *Tanzania*: The lecturers' marking style and the delayed provision of feedback on assignments have been cited as possible drawbacks to throughput rate in the Open University of Tanzania (Bhalalusesa, 2006).
- *Zambia*: The delivery of quality services to distance learners in dual mode institutions in Zambia and Botswana is hampered to a large extent by staff duality of assignments; staff commitment to conventional students; and poor resourcing of distance-learning units (Siaciwena, 1983, Kamau, 1999).
- *Zimbabwe*: Low feedback, unavailability and poor communication with the supervisors are seen by students as accounting for up to 90% of their failure to complete or submit research projects on time (Chabaya, Chiome & Chabaya, 2009).

A number of these factors can be addressed and their impact on the learners' retention, progression and performance be minimised through institutional capacity building and investment in enabling facilities including technology.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The rise of ODL from marginalisation by both the colonial and post-colonial governments can only be exacerbated by the development of a policy framework at two levels: the macro and the micro-levels.

Macro Level (National and Regional Levels)

The signing of a protocol on education in 1997 was the major step for the SADC member states to jointly recognize the power of distance education to deal with access and quality challenges of education in the region. Although, member states leadership realized the potential of ODL to contribute to the development of the region through human capacity development, it became apparent that not much would be achieved without policy directions. It was in this spirit that the SADC secretariat conceived the ODL Capacity Building Project. The first component of the project is to facilitate ODL regional and national policy development and second component one is to facilitate capacity building for ODL in the region.

A four sector study focusing on secondary, higher education, teacher education and technical and vocational education and training conducted in the region revealed the following challenges for ODL implementation (SADC-ODL Project, 2010):

- Lack of national ODL policies in most of the member states;
- The perceptions that some people had of ODL that it was of lower quality than conventional education;
- That the existing ODL institutions were not able to meet the demand for education in the region;
- Lack of adequately trained, experienced and competent staff for various positions in ODL, such as teaching, material designers and developers, ICT personnel, learner support services, audio-visual specialists, etc.
- Limited collaboration/partnerships and linkages among institutions and between countries;
- absence of a regional qualifications framework and the general lack of monitoring and evaluation in ODL;
- Inadequate physical and ICT infrastructure and networks to support teaching and learning in ODL; and
- Limited funding from Governments and other funders to support ODL institutions, programmes and courses.

These challenges would hinder implementation of ODL in a number of member states if left unaddressed. The study also revealed opportunities which ODL can exploit as follows:

- Demand for education exceeds the supply.
- Large pool of school leavers who dropped out of school because of inadequate capacity at the next levels or left school because of several problems and the majority being women and girls in most Member States.
- Needs of workers for upgrading programmes, continuous professional development and lifelong learning, and
- Proliferation of new ICT's.

At macro level therefore, the SADC Secretariat is facilitating regional policy framework and national policy development in all member states. This would create an environment in which ODL harmonisation and expansion would be possible because policy directions would avail resources as well as provide for quality assurance mechanisms. Currently, the

Secretariat is in the process of finalising the regional policy framework and it has already started working on its implementation strategies. At national level, most member states have moved from a zero draft of the national policy. The pace at which each member state is moving depends on the priorities each have set and the Secretariat does not have much control on the dates for national policies. It is worth noting however, that many member states are making considerable progress to complete their ODL policies.

The ODL policy framework at both regional and national levels should explicitly recognise the purpose of human resource development beyond national borders. For this reason, Ozoh (2011) proposes frameworks which should reflect the following principles:

- A recognition and a place for open and distance learning (ODL) in the nation's education policy;
- The political will for equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels irrespective of gender, race, status and otherwise with ODL as a vehicle for the access to education for all;
- The need for a more elastic and accessible model of education which includes online mode of accessing education contents;
- A semblance of open and distance education system for higher education;
- Investment in broadband technologies to enhance education contents and access electronically;
- Incentives for telecommunication industry in providing access infrastructure for rural communities to benefit from ODL; and
- Exploitation of close users' circuit groups by dispersed students through the telecommunications infrastructure to access education contents - this will reduce significantly the cost of access.

The essence of regional and national ODL policies is to provide guidelines to implementing institutions and practitioners. There is always a debate (but not for this paper) whether such policies should define operational guidelines or just stop at defining frameworks with emphasis on the principles in which guidelines would be determined. It is up to institutions at the micro level to come up with detailed policies that would enhance implementation of ODL in member states.

Micro Level (Institutional Level)

As is the case worldwide, two types of institutions are involved in offering programmes through ODL in the SADC region. These are: dual and single-mode. Dual-mode institutions are those which offer ODL in addition to face-to-face programmes they originally were set to offer. Single-mode institutions are those that offer their programmes through the ODL mode of delivery only. The single-mode institutions usually begin with a mandate which is exclusively ODL while the dual mode institutions might have included ODL to extend their original mandates for some justifiable reasons. In both dual- and single- mode institutions it is important that their mandates are well defined and the extent in which they will be carried out are well articulated. The policies must also state institution's place in the context of the existing education system and its relationships with other institutions internally or externally. Collaboration is vital in ODL.

Dual Mode Institutions

Two reasons often explain why some universities have become dual mode. First, is the need to reach out to more people despite failure to expand the infrastructure used in face-to-face programme. Second, is the need to raise financial resources in view of limited public funding. ODL programmes tend to be subject to existing face-to-face programmes. As such the programmes sometimes operate without a standalone policy because it is sometimes been

felt that ODL is just a means of reaching more with less available resources. Such an approach however, raises the problem of applying traditional pedagogical tools into a technologically enhanced environment (Khakar, 2011). There is therefore, need for an ODL policy to address issues of quality assurance, materials development, benchmarking and institutional linkages. A distance education policy would also acknowledge that the activities of ODL are managed differently from face-to-face responsibilities recognising contribution of many other players than just subject lectures. ODL as a mode of delivery benefits from different forms of knowledge and expertise which are combined through cooperative effort (Khakar, 2011).

Single-Mode Institutions

Open universities or colleges represent single mode institutions established to fully engage in distance teaching system with subsystems of materials development as well as student support and instruction. Examples of such institutions in the region are Open University of Tanzania, Zambian Open University, Zimbabwe Open University and University of South Africa (UNISA). The main focus of single-mode universities is largely on packaging information and designing delivery methods to make learning at a distance possible. Their policies will usually reflect teaching and learning as well as collaboration much more than the dual mode institutions which ties ODL component to the existing face-to-face regulations.

Table 4: Three Tiered Policy Analysis Framework for Distance Education

| Policy Area | Description |
|--|--|
| Faculty (including Continuing Education and Cooperative Extension) | Rewards (e.g., stipends, promotion and tenure, merit increases, etc.); Support (e.g., student help, technical assistance, training, etc.); Opportunities to learn about technology and new applications (e.g., release time, training, etc.); Intellectual property (e.g. ownership of materials, copyright, etc.) |
| Students/Participants | Support (e.g., access to technology, library resources, registration, advising, financial aid, etc.); Requirements and records (e.g., residency requirements, acceptance of courses from other places, transfer of credit, continuing education, etc.) |
| Management and Organization | Tuition and fee structure; Funding formula; Collaboration (e.g., with other Departments, units, institutions, consortia, intra-and inter-institutional, service areas, etc.); Resources (e.g., financial resources to support distance education, equipment, new technologies, etc.); Curricula/individual courses (e.g., delivery modes, course/program selection, plans to develop, individual sequences, course development, entire program delivery, interactivity requirements, test requirements, contact hour definitions, etc.). |

Source: King, Nugget, Russell, Eich, and Lacy (2000)

Regardless of whether the institution is dual or single mode, an ODL policy according to King, Nugget, Russell, Eich, and Lacy (2000) needs to reflect on key areas as in Table 4.

The three tier model can be useful to managers of ODL institutions who may wish to conduct a policy analysis to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. The model is reasonably comprehensive because it includes financial resources, student support, ICT and institutional collaborations within a country and across borders. An ODL policy needs to encompass international collaboration and accreditation because the use of online teaching takes the walls of an academic institution across national boundaries (Ozoh, 2011b). In dual mode institutions, the determination of faculty rewards from ODL fees could become a bone of contention between staff and institution's management (Maritim, 2009). It is therefore, necessary for a policy to stipulate how the proceeds from distance education would be used including payment of rewards to various contributors and maintenance of a quality assurance system.

Financing of ODL Programmes

In the SADC sector study report, it came out clearly that despite governments' commitment to use ODL, member states budgets did not reflect the commitments. One reason for this could be the fact that most beneficiaries of ODL are working adults who are expected to pay full costs of their learning. In universities, it is often observed that fees for mature entries are much higher than those of young undergraduates. Yet, most ODL institutions do not have adequate numbers to offset payments for all activities and services rendered. In dual mode institutions, sometimes funds from distance education are diverted to funding face-to-face activities which are usually underfunded. This however needs to change as ODL increasingly becomes popular even to young people who have not been selected into face-to-face programmes of public universities. It is also necessary to ensure that money raised from ODL be spent on ODL activities to safeguard its quality.

Capacity Building and Enhancement

The increasing demand for education and training among school leavers and workers as well as the proliferation of ICT in the SADC region were identified as opportunities for expansion of ODL. But this is against the background of lack of trained or qualified ODL practitioners who can manage ODL to get the benefits expected by the region. ODL requires institutional leadership with skills in managing change, managing people, managing risks, managing resources and costs so as to effectively interpret changes in the social, political and economic environments (Khakhar, 2011). It further requires academics who can adapt to methodologies that can reach out to more people at distance with packaged information with the support of other expertise in ICT. In essence, the growth of ODL in the region calls for continuous training to build the capacity which can lead to sustainability of quality ODL programmes in the region.

Quality Assurance

One major reason which has caused public negative attitude of ODL is its perceived low quality. It is therefore necessary that every ODL programme puts in place quality assurance mechanisms to offer credible qualifications and safeguard its image. A quality assurance policy must be worked along the development and implementation of the programme so as to establish institutional ownership. Using an imported quality assurance policy at the beginning of an ODL programme may receive resistance from enthusiastic beginners. It may also be seen as an attempt to impose a stronger culture on an emerging programme which might threaten existing academic freedom in a dual mode.

OPERATIONALISATION OF SADC EDUCATION AND TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Following the formation of SADC, Member States had to concretise the tools and the mechanisms for the envisaged regional cooperations. This involved among others:

- The signing of the Protocol on Education and Training by the Heads of State in 1997, and
- The establishment of Centres of Specialisation.

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training

The SADC Protocol on Education and Training recognises ODL as a vehicle for achieving educational needs of non-conventional learners. Specifically, the Member States agreed that the objectives of distance education *inter alia* are to:

- (a) Improve access to education and training and to reduce the inequalities in the acquisition of education and training.
- (b) Work towards achieving universal literacy and numeracy.
- (c) Reduce the cost of education and training by maximising on the economies of scale offered by distance education.
- (d) Develop life skills.

The Protocol launched Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning Project with three objectives, namely:

- Development and deployment of effective harmonized open and distance learning.
- Increase access to quality education and training and
- Support regional integration across SADC.

The Centre of Specialisation in Open and Distance Learning in Teacher Education

There are four Centres of Specialisation that have been established by SADC, namely:

- Centre of Specialisation in Public Administration and Management at University of Botswana.
- Centre of Specialisation in Education Policy and Management at University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.
- Centre of Specialisation in Secondary Education in Malawi, and
- Centre of Specialisation in Open and Distance Learning in Teacher Education at the Open University of Tanzania, Tanzania.

Article 7(E) of Protocol address matters related to Centre of Specialisation, where Member of States agreed on:

- The general objective of the Centre is to build capacity for regional training institutions to offer education and training programmes in critical and specialised areas and thereby increase the stock of trained personnel in the region.
- Establishment of the Centre within an existing institution.
- Support of the Centre through such means as sending students and providing scholarships.
- Regional programmes to be offered at the Centre to focus primarily on post-graduate field of study.
- Selection of Centre to be done through a competitive bidding in the region.
- Determination of subject areas to be offered at the Centre to be done through consultations between the universities and the Governments of SADC countries.
- Admission of students from SADC Member States through a quota system.
- Language of instruction at the Centre be that of the host country.
- Provision by the Centre of conducive environment to enable students pursue and complete their programmes.
- The charge of uniform fees for all students from SADC countries.

- Monitoring and evaluation of the Centre's discharge and dispensation of its mandate.
- Withdrawal of the regional status and support to the Centre where the results of monitoring and evaluation are not satisfactory.

Centre's Training Mandate

As a capacity building institution, the Centre is mandated by SADC to provide specialised short and long-term training courses in 10 ODL priority areas, namely:

- ODL curriculum planning and material development.
- ODL financing, budgeting and costing.
- Learner support.
- Assessment and accreditation in ODL.
- e-learning.
- ODL management, administration and marketing.
- Quality assurance in ODL.
- Research skills in ODL application (including policy research).
- Strategic planning and management of ODL.
- Monitoring and evaluation in ODL.

Targeted Groups

The training targets the following groups:

- Primary beneficiaries: teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary levels institutions including technical and vocational training institutions and universities,
- Secondary beneficiaries: Decision-makers in national Ministries of Education and Training, and
- Selection of trainees by Member States with gender consideration as mandatory.

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