The Right to Education for Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria through Open and Distance Learning

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Abstract*: The number of people who have been forcibly displaced across Nigeria, either as a result of environmental or conflict induced factors since the end of military rule in 1999 is estimated to be more than half a million. A distinctive challenge facing internally displaced persons (IDPs) are structural conditions that deny them access to the right to education. The main aim of the study is to investigate the role of open and distance learning in providing access and educational opportunities to the IDPs. The research methodology for this study is constructivist, adopting a case-based approach of the Middle Belt Region, an area known for its 'crisis of citizenship' and with the highest number of IDPs. Using two single mode open and distance learning institutions: National Teachers Institute and the National Open University of Nigeria, the study investigated how the mounting of certification programmes has significantly affected the "Four As" framework delineating the content of the right to education for IDPs: Availability; Accessibility; Acceptability and Adaptability. The paper recommends that a comprehensive framework be put in place by the government in deploying accessible educational technologies to enable those living in marginalised communities not to be excluded from Education for All Goals.*

Key Words: internally displaced persons, open and distance learning, education for all goals, the right to education, national teachers institute, National Open University of Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Since the return of Nigeria to civil rule after two decades of military eccentricity, the number of people who have forcibly been displaced either as a result of environmental or conflict induced factors has been estimated to be over half a million. A major challenge facing Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) is gaining access to educational opportunities. Thus Mooney and French (2005: 5) have observed that "despite the benefits of education for internally displaced children, displacement often presents specific barriers to teaching and learning". The effects of displacements that relates to education include loss of human resources and physical infrastructure, pressure on the already overstretched educational infrastructure in the host community, lack of resources needed to pay school fees or purchase other materials and increased poverty leading to some internally displaced persons staying out of school in order to work to supplement the family income (IDMC, 2010).

Failure to provide education for those who have been internally displaced, either as a result of conflict or as a result of environmental hazards may deprive them of their right to education, and efforts towards achieving Education for All (EFA) Goals. The need for an educational system that allows IDPs to access education at every stage of displacement therefore, cannot be over emphasized. Based on the complexities of African educational landscape, displacement and increasing pauperization of the people, open and distance learning (ODL) has increasingly been shown to allow education to break out of the iron triangle of access, cost and quality that has constrained it from time immemorial.

Indeed, even within Nigeria, the thrust to use ODL as a means of reaching the marginalized groups such as women in purdah, inmates, rural dwellers and others has received both theoretical and policy attention. Thus, the Federal Government of Nigeria has established the National Teachers Institute (NTI) and National Open University of Nigeria as a veritable avenue for providing accessible, cost-effective, and qualitative education. The guiding philosophy behind this policy-direction is to ensure that education is entrenched as a right in the country. While internal displacements affects the quality, cost and access to educational opportunities, the vital role of education as a response to emergencies has been recognized with the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) - a global network of around 1,400 individual and organizational members who work together within a humanitarian and development minimum standards framework to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction:

> Education is not only a right, but in situations of emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction, it provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, which can be both life-saving and life-sustaining. Education sustains life by offering safe spaces for learning, as well as the ability to identify and provide support for affected individuals – particularly children and adolescents. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by giving a sense of normalcy, stability, structure and hope for the future during a time of crisis, and provides essential building blocks for future economic stability…. it can also save lives by protecting against exploitation and harm, including abduction, recruitment of children into armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence. Lastly, education provides the knowledge and skills to survive in a crisis through the dissemination of lifesaving information about landmine safety, HIV/AIDS prevention, conflict resolution and peace building (INEE, 2004: 5).

UNHCR (2007:5) has identified the barriers to access for refugee populations as restricted livelihood opportunities, lack of physical access to schools or to safe-school environments, and limited post-primary educational opportunities. In addition, IDMC (2009:18) identified the barriers to access for IDPs as school fees and other school-related costs, opportunity costs of labour, insecurity, and lack of schools in areas of displacement. A prominent challenge facing IDPs and returnees is that they face extreme poverty. They usually leave behind their possessions and, with restrictions on their freedom of movement and the regulation of professions (Horst, 2006). Uncertainty about the future compounds poverty further leading to doubts about the benefits of education (Dryden-Peterson, 2006). Further, the areas set aside for refugees and IDPs by host countries and host communities are often the most neglected regions with infertile land and lack of access to services and infrastructure, including schools (Jacobsen, 2005). Another important negative effect of displacement is on gender. During displacement, community support systems disintegrate, social norms break down, and laws are not enforced (Hynes *et al.,* 2004; Ward and Vann, 2002) heightening discrimination based on gender and disability. This culture resulting from displacement can impact on the ability of refugees, IDPs, and returnees to safely attend school.

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of open and distance learning in enhancing the right to education for IDPs, using the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria as a case study. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are pursued: (a) to examine the guiding philosophy of ODL in providing accessible, qualitative and cost-effective education to IDPs (b) to address the barriers of education that displacement provides; and (c) to examine the role of ODL in enhancing the right to education for IDPs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a mixed methodological approach for which data were collected between 2009 and 2010 in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. There is an emerging interest in the use of mixed methods in the conduct of social science research because neither the qualitative nor the quantitative approach is necessarily superior to the other (Punch 1998); while their combined usage maximizes their strengths and minimizes their weaknesses (Creswell 2003). To examine the role of ODL in providing access to education for IDPs, a sample of 70 learners and graduates of the NTI and NOUN was selected using the snowball sampling approach and interview. Snowballing involves the selection of a sample size that emerges through a process of reference from one respondent to another and has a high potential for bias (Denscombe, 1998). However, this technique was adopted to provide access to respondents with privileged information needed to answer the research questions. To minimize the effect of bias, a check-list of confirming questions was designed for respondents prior to the conduct of the actual interviews. The qualitative data focused on respondents' access to education through the ODL mode and the restrictions they faced in accessing conventional education.

An initial analysis of the qualitative data informed the subsequent design of a questionnaire for the collection of quantitative data from a random sample of 419 respondents drawn largely from graduates of ODL programmes. This sequence was followed to first provide an understanding of respondents' views on the research questions, based on which quantitative data were collected from a larger sample for the purposes of triangulation and broad respondents' representation. Graduates were the main target group of this sample while learners and ODL staff were a subsidiary. It is the qualitative and quantitative data relating to access to higher education for IDPs through ODL of the study that this paper is based on.

A fundamental problem that confronted the study was related to gaining access to the IDPs. Interviewing IDPs, especially those resulting from conflict was difficult, since most of them were suspicious of providing information to strangers. To adequately address this problem, a sensitization meeting was held with the community representatives, who were able to convince their subjects to participate in the exercise. Data were collected from cross-sections of 17 rural and 18 urban and peri-urban communities in Plateau State and Benue State in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF IDPs

A starting point here would be what is meant by distance education. Distance education has been defined as an educational process in which teachers and learners are separated in space/ and or time for some or all the study and in which learning materials take over some of the traditional role of the teacher. Moore and Kearsley (1996) define distance education as planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational administrative arrangements. Distance education, therefore, is the delivery of learning or training to learners who are separated, mostly by time and space, from those who are teaching and training. On the other hand, open learning describes policies and practices that permit entry to learning with no barriers or minimal barriers of age, gender or time while recognizing prior learning. Conceptually distinct, yet complementary, these two phenomena come together in the term open and distance learning (COL, 2009).

With the recent improvement in modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), distance learning has emerged as an inevitable and phenomenal form of education in

the history of educational developments internationally. While the formal system of education continues to be the mainstream of educational transaction, it has inherent limitations with regard to expansion, provision of access and equity, and cost effectiveness. As Dickshit *et al*. (2002: 252) argue, "with the emergence of modern ICTs, it is now possible to adopt flexible, constructivist, learner-friendly and multi-perspective approaches to teaching-learning, so essential for nurturing creativity, leadership, scholarship and integrated development of human personality." In many regards, OFL is a suitable response to learners ill-served in the mainstream system (e.g. marginalised communities, illiterate with commitments that preclude full-time attendance at institutions, conflict areas, those with basic education, health, sanitation, food security, under-qualified teachers in rural areas) etc. (IRFOL, 2004).

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR IDPS

All people are entitled to education. The right to education is recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous major human rights treaties, including the Convention on Economic and Social Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Walter 2008: 107). The right to education is also made explicit in all major regional human rights treaties. These regional treaties include the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights; between these regional treaties and others the right to education is binding on most countries with sizeable IDP populations.

The content of the right to education is not entirely new (Mooney and Wyndham, 2009: 251). The UN General Assembly called for free and compulsory primary education as early as 1959. The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 13* (E/C.12/1999/10, 1999), para.57 stressed that the right to education includes obligations which must be realised immediately, including the obligation to ensure free and compulsory primary education, and the prohibition of discrimination in education. States may realise other obligations in a progressive manner, moving "as expeditiously and effectively as possible" toward, for instance, provision of secondary and higher education in accordance with international law. According to the Machel 10-year Strategic Review, investment in education, including secondary education, is "especially critical" in post-conflict transitions including searches for durable solutions to displacement (UNICEF, 2007).

The right to education is therefore an "enabling right," permitting the enjoyment of many other rights. These include civil and political rights such as freedom of information, expression, and the right to vote; and economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to choose work and to receive equal pay for work. In its study on Education *in Situations of Emergency, Crisis, and Reconstruction,* UNESCO (2003: 7-8) argued that in the humanitarian context, the right to education also enables the delivery of life-saving messages, provides a sense of normality, and absorbs energies of adolescents whose alternative options might include recruitment and violence. As such, it has come to be seen as the "fourth pillar" of humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict, alongside nutrition, health, and shelter.

Global efforts at providing education for internally displaced persons have delineated four essential features of the right to education: availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability (the "Four As"). These four provisions apply equally in times of peace and in times of conflict. Although most of these international instruments are concerned with

internal displaced children, they are broad enough to cover both children and adults displaced during natural disasters, conflicts, and wars.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MIDDLE BELT REGION OF NIGERIA

Benue State and Plateau State selected as case studies for the study are found at the Central States of Nigeria otherwise called the "Middle Belt," a geopolitical term with a lot of ethno-religious connotations comprising the states of Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa, Plateau, and Taraba. These states have unique characteristics vis-`a-vis other states in the federation. A Special Report by the National Orientation Agency (NOA 2002) identifies these features to include:

(i) Home to over 50% of ethnic groups in Nigeria; although no ethnic group shares 100% of its culture with other ethnic groups;
(ii) Christianity, Islam, and Traditional African Religion all command considerable influence on the lives of the people (i.e., there is deep-seated religious and cultural diversity);
(iii) Apart from rich mineral resources, the zone is also endowed with massive land and grazing activities, explaining the massive influx of people from other areas to this zone;
(iv) In terms of development, the zone is one of the least developed in spite of the location of the Federal Capital close to the zone;
(v) The zone has a very large pool of ex-servicemen, some of who are not gainfully employed;
(vi) The people of this zone are known to be hospitable, accommodating, and peaceful. It is indeed worrisome that such a people could suddenly be engaged in frequent violent clashes (NOA, 2002: 2–3).

Since the return of Nigeria to civil rule in 1999 after more than two decades of military interregnum, the number of people who have been forcibly displaced either, for short or longer periods are estimated to be half a million (IRIN 2008). Although, only rough estimates of the number of IDPs and their location are available as there are no reliable statistics on internal displacement in the country. The figures provided by government and non-governmental agencies are generally only estimates referring to localised situations. In most cases, the numbers refer to people who have sought shelter at temporary IDPs camps.

Against a background of systematic patterns of inequality and intense competition for resources, Nigeria has witnessed fierce ethnic and communal clashes that have not only displaced whole communities, but in most cases, led to loss of lives and properties. Armed conflict between security forces and the rebel Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has caused displacement in the Niger Delta region, while across the rest of the country the most significant cause of violence has been the entrenched division between people considered indigenous to an area and those regarded as settlers. Indigenous groups have routinely prevented settlers from owning land or businesses, or accessing jobs and education, leading inevitably to tensions.

The "Middle Belt" in Nigeria, is the area with the highest concentration of minority ethnic groups. All these areas have witnessed intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts that have spread across different states. Researchers have pointed to a "crisis of citizenship" in which "different attitudes to citizenship contribute to political conflicts" (Ambe-Uva, 2011a; Idowu, 1999), articulated around the "settler-indigene" syndrome, fuelled by feelings of exclusion and struggles for recognition as causes of conflicts in these areas (Action Aid, 2008).

As in the Niger Delta, social factors such as mounting poverty, low levels of education and youth alienation have also contributed to the frequent occurrence of violence. Conflicts have been triggered by a range of events including elections and disputed election results, boundary disputes, appointments, challenges to existing customary rights, political assassinations, the creation of new local government districts, land disputes, religious dissent, population movements and the impact of development projects (Action Aid, 2008: 22). IRIN (2009) acknowledged that impunity for perpetrators of sectarian violence is common. While government authorities are reportedly sometimes under political pressure to bring perpetrators to justice, in some cases security forces have themselves been responsible for arbitrary killings (Ambe-Uva, 2011b). As repeated bouts of violence in Plateau State in 2001, 2004, 2008 and 2010 and Benue and Taraba States in 2007, and the military massacre in 2001 of 200 innocent citizens in the Tiv part of Benue State have shown lack of accountability and have prevented the sustainable resolution of sectarian conflicts.

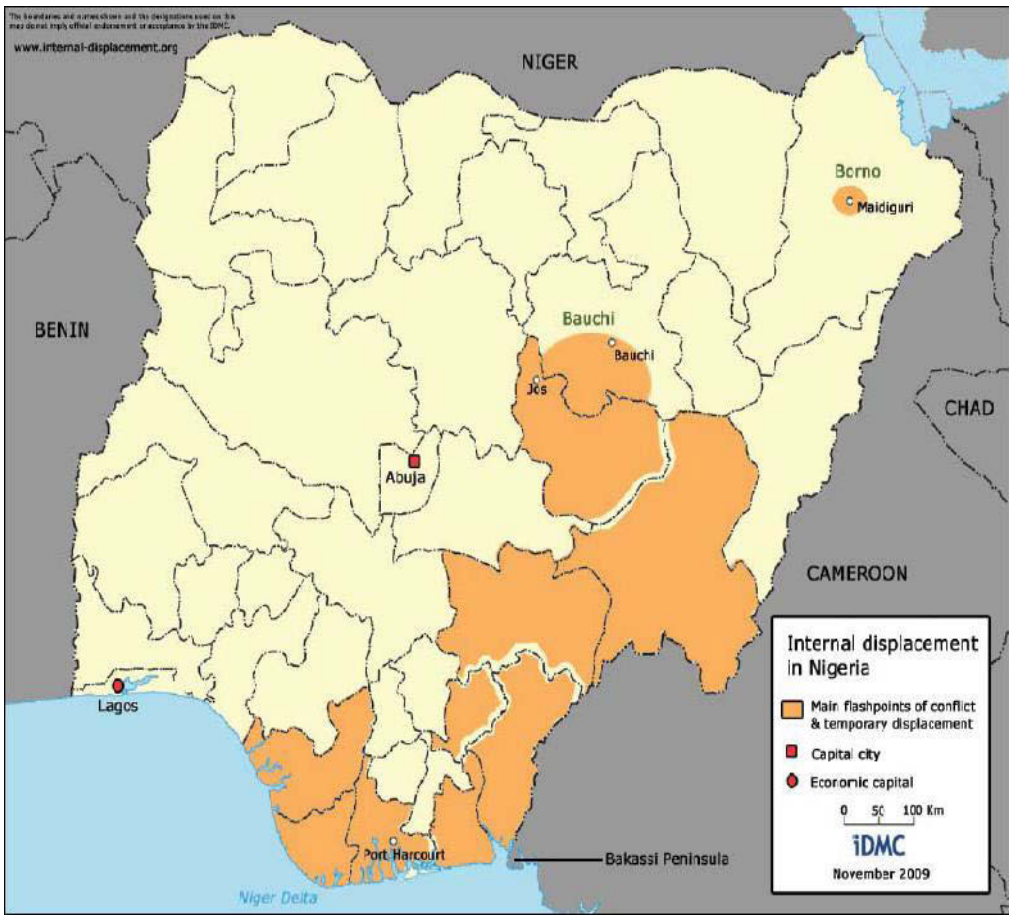

Figure 1: Map of Internal Displacement in Nigeria

Source: **IDMC (2009).** ***Nigeria: No End to Internal Displacement.***
Norwegian Refugee Commission: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

RESULTS

Consequences of Displacement

The consequences of being internally displaced were generally perceived in the qualitative and quantitative samples of 70 and 419 respondents respectively to be negative. One of those who led the sensitisation workshop summed it all when he argued:

> "the debilitating effect of being displaced during conflict in your country is better imagined. Most of us have witnessed grave human rights abuses, including rape, killings, disappearances, torture, and destruction of property against defenceless civilians. This has reduced us to less than humans; waking up every day with the knowledge that the bare necessities of human existence would elude us remains the worst nightmare".

The consequences of displacement identified by respondents in the qualitative sample are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Consequences of displacement identified by respondents

Effects of Displacement	Percent	Effects of Displacement	Percent
Poverty	89	Lack of employment opportunities	75
Absence of decent shelter	85	Absence of social services	61
Absence of health facilities	78	Absence of decent transportation	59
Lack of educational opportunities	65	Absence of assistance from government or aid agencies	52
Access to portable water	62	Absence of places of worship	27
Absence of sanitation	60	Prospects of future migration	31

Source: **Authors Field Work, 2009**

From Table 1 it can be deduced that apart from the negative effects of internal displacement on places of worship (27%) and prospects of future migration (31%), all the other listed items are highly affected by displacement. Among them, poverty ranks higher (89%) followed by shelter and health facilities, (85% and 78%) respectively.

Respondents Perception of the role of education for the IDPs

The bourgeoning literature on the need to provide education for the IDPs highlights the fact that education for IDPs serves as a protective function and conveys life-saving messages (INEE, 2010: 2), and gives them the skills needed to function in their areas of displacement, and on return. This education does not only enable them to participate in the market place, but also leaves them less likely to succumb to the negative aspects of long term displacement, including violence, recruitment, and child labour (IDMC, 2010: 4).

The responses of the 419 stakeholders to a question that sought to investigate the impact of the absence of educational opportunities for IDPs are displayed in Table 3. The results in Table 3 indicate a generally high perception amongst respondent (57-77%) on the absence of educational opportunities for IDPs. One of our respondent, who is also a Head Teacher in

Vaase, at the Benue-Taraba border had this to say about the imperative of providing education for the IDPs

> "I have been teaching in this school for more than 18 years before I was made a 'Head Master'. Most children here have chosen the career of farming. However, frequent and recent communal clashes in this area mean that this choice is tragically misguided. Most of those displaced wished that they had elementary education, to start a different career such as teaching or even nursing. Those with Senior Secondary School Certificates and National Certificates of Education have adapted better as forcibly displaced people".

Table 2: The Impact of Accessible Education on IDPs

Respondent	Number	Absence of Education may lead to more Difficulties for IDPs	
		Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Male	226	59%	18%
Female	193	63%	9%
Plateau State	333	57%	16%
Benue State	86	77%	5%
NOUN	184	64%	9%
NTI	235	59%	17%

Source: Authors Fieldwork, 2009

Respondents Perception of Access to Education for the IDPs

The right to education is not restricted to a certain stage of displacement, nor is it to a level of education, a fact rooted in both human rights law and humanitarian law. The Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement stresses that the right to education "shall be made available to internally displaced people, in particular adolescents and women, whether or not living in camps, as soon as conditions permit" (Guiding Principle 23). The right to education as specified in Guiding Principle 23(1) applies not only to displaced children, but also to all IDPs: "the right to education is by no means limited to children of primary-school age… the right to education applies not only to young children but also to older children as well as adults." Likewise, the right to education in internal displacement is "not confined to formal schooling but also extends, as sub-paragraph (3) indicates, to general 'educational programmes' and to 'training' as well". Programmes that adapt to the specific needs of IDPs over time, such as youth catch-up programmes, temporary learning centres, job training facilities, and literacy and numeracy programmes, can help to fulfil the right to education.

The right to education in displacement, as well as extending to children and adults, males and females, covers traditional schools and non-traditional educational settings. Guiding Principle 23, as Mooney and Wyndham (2009: 249) emphasise, "is not confined to formal schooling but also extends, to general "educational programmes" and to "training" as well".

Statistics of enrolment figures in both primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are generally low. Even in normal educational environment, these percentages are not promising. "The fact that children under 15 constitute approximately 45% of the population in Nigeria makes basic education a priority area. However, of the 42.1 million Nigerians of eligible school age, only 22.3 million are in primary schools, as of December 2005. In other words 19.8 million (47%) are not receiving an education. Moreover, even though 33.9 million

Nigerians are qualified for secondary school, only 6.4 million children are attending at the end of 2005 (FME Presentation 2006, 6).

Table 3: Access to different levels of education for the IDPs

	Male	Female
Primary	21%	14%
Secondary	3.8%	3.2%
Tertiary	02%	01%
Other	04%	02%
Total	31.8	20.2

Source: **Authors Fieldwork 2010**

The corresponding figures of access to education for IDPs are generally lower compared to normal educational environment. On an average, only 17% of internally displaced children have access to primary education, 3.5% to secondary schooling, compared to 5.3 % for normal secondary school enrolment, 1.5% for tertiary education. Other forms of education, such as vocational and apprenticeship also sum up to 3%. Even though more than 50 million Nigerians are qualified for tertiary education, there is a wide gulf between the demands for spaces and spots in the educational system at the tertiary level versus the actual number of students admitted annually (see Table 4 and 5).

Table 4: Number of applicants and number of students admitted to higher education programs in Nigeria

Universities	**1996/97**	**1998/99**	**1999/00**	**2000/2001**
Number of Applicants	371,482	400,194	461,548	653,818
Number Admitted	56,055	78,550	78,550	50,277
Polytechnics				
Number of Applicants	168,981	123,231	110,831	198,850
Number Admitted	28,091	33,168	37,005	38,145
Colleges of Education				
Number of Applicants	16,546	27,916	n/a	14,438
Number Admitted	12,023	12,562	n/a	6,672

Source**: Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, 2004**

Table 4 and 5 interestingly reveal that between 1996 - 2006, the highest point of admission in universities has been only 15% of the total number of applicants. These figures only include those who actually took part in the matriculation examinations, constituting less than 4% of the population within the age bracket of tertiary education. However, for IDPs, this figure is even worse, only 1.5%, as reported by our respondents are able to access tertiary education.

Both the enrolment in normal and emergency education thus shows that the conventional higher education system is hard pressed to meet the demands of burgeoning population of the country for highly accessible, affordable and qualitative higher education.

Table 5: Applications and Admission Statistics for Nigerian Universities

Year	# of Universities	Total # of Applicants	Total # Admitted	Percentage Admitted	Total # Unplaced
2002/2003	53	994,381	51,845	5.2%	942,535
2003/2004	54	1,046,950	105,157	10.0%	941,793
2004/2005	56	841,878	122,492	14.5%	719,386
2005/2006	75	916,371	N/A	-	-
2006/2007	*76*	806,089	123,626	15.3%	679,846

Source: **Compiled from Statistics from the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) 2007**

Open and Distance Learning and the Right to Education

The overall development of ODL over the last thirty five years according to Sir John Daniel has been a revolution. This assertion stems from the fact that ODL has broken open the straitjacket of the triangle of access, cost and quality that has always constrained attempts to educate people. Throughout history education has been accepted without argument, an insidious link between quality and exclusivity. You cannot have quality education unless you exclude many people from it (Daniel, 2004:3-5). However, ODL with the adoption of sound and environmental friendly technologies has broken this link. For the first time in history you can have greater access, higher quality and lower cost at the same time. One question which remains to be answered is whether ODL is able to meet the essential features of the right to education: availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability.

Availability

Availability implies that education be made available for IDPs, regardless of whether they have found refuge in camps and elsewhere. Schools are to be economically accessible, and there should be sufficient infrastructure to house learners. In addition, there should be enough trained teachers (receiving appropriate salaries) as well as educational materials.

Table 6: Respondents Perception of ODL and Availability of Tertiary Education

Respondent	Number	ODL enhances the availability of post-secondary Schooling for the IDPs	
		Significant/Very Significant	Negligible/Very Negligible
Male	226	57%	30%
Female	193	53%	28%
Plateau State	333	52%	59%
Benue State	86	66%	16%
NOUN	184	54%	41%
NTI	235	56%	20%

In Table 6, over half of male 128 (57%) and female 103 (53%) respondents were of the opinion that ODL had made a significant or very significant contribution to the availability of education for the IDPs. The measure of significance was a qualitative view expressed by

respondents based on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5 in the questionnaire for quantitative data. Out of these, 128 (55%) were in the more peri-urban areas, whilst 103 (45%) were in the more rural areas. There were slightly more IDPs from Benue 57 (66%) than Plateau 174 (52%) who indicated that ODL contributed significantly to availability of education. More IDPs associated with NOUN 76 (41%) than NTI 46 (20%) indicated that the significance of ODL to the availability of education was either negligible or very negligible. There were 61 (15%) of the respondents who were uncertain of the impact of ODL to availability of education, of whom 37 (61%) were in Benue and 24 (39%) in Plateau States. These results suggested associations between respondents states of displacement, and institutions associated with on the one hand, and their perceptions that ODL increases the availability of education for IDPs on the other.

Accessibility

The purpose of adopting ODL as a policy option is ostensibly to increase access to higher education especially by non-traditional learners. Access implies the facilitation of people, in this case IDPs, to get education, the opportunity for enrolment as well as the facilitation and the encouragement of sustaining enrolment by learners in appropriate education programmes. UNESCO (2002), equally stated that ODL represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering learning opportunities to individuals and group of learners. The World Declaration on Education for All emphasises that "those displaced by war" should not suffer any discrimination in access to education (UNESCO, 1990).

Our respondents viewed availability and accessibility of education at the post-secondary level to mean the same thing. When asked whether ODL increased access to education, 57% and 53% male and female respectively responded that ODL significantly/very significantly increased more access to education for the IDPs. These figures were higher for Benue (66%) than for Plateau (52%). Out of these, only 20% and 41%, associated with NTI and NOUN respectively, thought that ODL had negligible/very negligible impact on access to education for those that are internally displaced. These findings confirm the argument of Calvert (1986), that ODL helps extend the market for education to clientele who have not been previously served. In developing countries, particularly in Africa, this clientele has continued to increase in geometric proportion.

Acceptability

An acceptable education for IDPs is one adjudged to be of good content, good quality, and linguistically and culturally appropriate. The notion of respect for cultural identity and language is especially relevant for displaced children from minority backgrounds, who may find themselves in areas dominated by different ethnic groups.

We sought qualitative responses from participants from our survey regarding the impact of ODL in delivering acceptable education for those who were internally displaced. Here, there were mixed responses, in terms of cultural identity and the language used. Most respondents were of the view that the ODL mode of education was culturally appropriate. However, when it came to examples and illustrations, most of them mentioned that they were removed from their environment. They also felt that names of people, locations, and practices should have reflected Nigerian, even at best, African. These where mentioned more from respondents associated with NTI than NOUN. As one of the respondents aptly argued:

> "there seems to be a disconnection between names like Pradesh, Panchayat, Doosra Dashak and Maharashtra, and places like Brington and Rajasthan. Most a times, we are left with no option than to chew and swallow these words as they are, without

knowing what they mean, a fact compounded when some of our facilitators cannot provide satisfactory explanations either".

Studies have stressed the critical success factor is incorporating culture when designing and implementing a learning programme. This is particularly valuable in peace building because it can draw participants together. Drama and storytelling are important social tools for community participation and learner engagement and, as these elements are a natural component of many cultures, they can be highly effective tools for development and fit well with ODL approaches. Pragmatic materials and approaches in the design of a programme are rooted in culture and history and therefore based on the accumulated experience of the community. This bottom-up approach to planning techniques is critical to both the effectiveness and sustainability of community-based ODL initiatives (Munro and Pringle, 2008: 20)

Adaptability

Adaptability highlights the imperative for the education system to be flexible and take into account the best interest of the IDPs. Since most displacements lasts for years; schools are supposed to help IDPs adapt to their current surroundings, as well as prepare them for their life which may follow a durable solution to their displacement. People in special circumstances may not only require alternative modes of learning and alternative teaching strategies, but may also require new or adapted curricula (MITT/HEARD, 2005: 44). ODL ensures that curricula is specifically adapted to local needs and skills, and make provision in time allocations for local as well as centrally defined curriculum issues.

The results showed that over 60% of respondents' perceived ODL programmes as being adaptable to the interest of IDPs compared to conventional education. Learning to learn, computer skills, HIV/AIDS skills, computation skills and communications skills were some of the areas where ODL was able to adapt to the needs of IDPs. Other areas were conflict resolution and mediating skills. The simple technology utilised for instructional delivery consisting of print, CD Rom, and as in the case of the NOUN, rudimentary internet based delivery was equally adaptable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conceptual relevance of education for IDPs in sub-Saharan Africa cannot be overemphasized. Using the four essential features of the right to education, this study shows that ODL is a veritable tool for enhancing the right to education for those internally displaced. Among some of the reasons cited are flexibility, accessibility, constructive learner-friendly instructional delivery, availability, adaptability, acceptability, accessibility and the simple technology used to reach a number of people who cannot be serviced by mainstream educational system. While all respondents are in agreement on the role of ODL in enhancing the right to education for IDPs, there is actually a gender tilt, as a slightly higher percentage of female 63% (193) against 59% (226) responded that ODL is better suited for the needs of the IDPs. This finding concurs with Olakulehin and Ojo (2006), who argue that the only effective way to meaningfully contribute to the emancipation of women in the Nigerian society is to widen the access of women and girls to quality for education. Since the conventional structures of education have not been able to adequately meet the demands of female education in Nigeria, ODL readily fills in this void. Our respondents agreed that this mode of delivery has afforded them the opportunity to benefit from education, which they would not otherwise have. Thus, the real question is whether the government is effectively employing ODL to meet the educational needs of the IDPs in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. This paper concludes that by breaking the triangular concept

of access, cost and quality that deny educational opportunities to most of the marginalized groups, ODL is significantly increasing educational access to IDPs in Nigeria. The paper therefore recommends that a comprehensive framework be put in place by the government in deploying accessible educational technologies to enable those living in marginalised communities not to be excluded from Education for All Goals.

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