Institutional Organisation of Distance Secondary School Teacher Training in Malawi: A Case Study

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Abstract

There is a paucity of research on the institutional organisation of distance education. This article stems from a larger project that explored the learning implications of distance secondary school teacher training in Malawi. Drawing on the industrial education theory, it focuses on the nature of institutional organisation of distance teacher training at Domasi College of Education and Mzuzu University. Data were collected by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews with two administrators and two instructors, as well as document analysis. The study revealed challenges relating to the one-size-fits-all approach to the institutional organisation of distance teacher training in terms of distance education systems; their functions and coordination; documentation of plans; and instructional material design. This points to a lack of lucid planning for open and distance education in Malawi. Recommendations based on the findings are offered to improve the country's distance education system.

Key words: Institutional organisation, distance secondary school teacher training, Malawi

LIl y a peu de recherches sur l'organisation institutionnelle de l'enseignement à distance. Cet article est issu d'un projet plus large qui a exploré les implications d'apprentissage de la formation à distance des enseignants du secondaire au Malawi. S'appuyant sur la théorie de l'éducation industrielle, il se concentre sur la nature de l'organisation institutionnelle de la formation des enseignants à distance au Domasi College of Education et à l'Université de Mzuzu. Les données ont été collectées au moyen d'entretiens approfondis

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semi-structurés avec deux administrateurs et deux instructeurs, ainsi que par l'analyse de documents. L'étude a révélé des défis liés à l'approche unique de l'organisation institutionnelle de la formation des enseignants à distance en termes de systèmes à distance, de leurs fonctions et de leur coordination, de la documentation des plans et de la conception du matériel pédagogique. Cela indique un manque de planification lucide pour l'enseignement ouvert et à distance au Malawi. Des recommandations basées sur les résultats sont proposées pour améliorer le système d'enseignement à distance du pays.

Mots clés: Organisation institutionnelle, formation à distance des enseignants du secondaire, Malawi.

1.   Introduction

Mzuzu University and Domasi College of Education are the sole public providers of secondary teacher distance education in Malawi. Distance education was introduced at Domasi College of Education in 2000 to upgrade primary school teachers teaching in community day and rural secondary schools to diploma level. A similar programme was launched at Mzuzu University in 2011 to accelerate the training of secondary school teachers and upgrade underqualified primary school teachers teaching in secondary schools (Chawinga and Zozie, 2016; Msiska, 2013). Since these teachers obtained a certificate to teach the primary school curriculum, they required further training for secondary school curriculum delivery. While the two institutions offer both traditional and distance courses, the distance training is not of the same standard as that offered in countries such as Zambia and Nigeria (Simango, 2016; Ipaye, 2015). It is against this background that this article explores the institutional organisation of distance education in the two institutions in order to make recommendations for improved delivery of teacher training in Malawi.

The following section conceptualises the concept of institutional organisation before engaging the theoretical lens of the industrial education theory. This is followed by the presentation of the research methodology and the study's findings, recommendations and conclusions.

Conceptualising Institutional Organisation

The literature tends to discuss what is involved in institutional organisation rather than defining the concept. Dzimbiri (2015, p. 1) defines an institution

as "an organisation with a socialisation purpose whose perfection and efficacy relies on its specificity of purpose, work specialisation and division of labour". Ipaye (2015, p. 2) argues that the "organisational pattern and operating practices of ODL [open distance learning] institutions depend on...the philosophy underlying the establishment of the institution, economic restrictions, societal demands, political dictates and institutional control." Therefore, when the institutional design or mode of instruction is changed, the institution's organisation is affected as it rearranges or transforms its structures to enable and effect change (Moore, 1983). It can thus be argued that, institutional organisation may include setting the distance education system, which countries and institutions put in place to facilitate the organisation of open and distance education (ODE).

Distance and traditional education differ in terms of institutional and resource organisation, student learning and course design, calling for educators to have different organisational, professional and academic skills (Beaudoin, 2016). Institutional organisation is perhaps the most important aspect of distance education and the likely source of improved learning (Moore and Kearsley, 2011). This is because it sets a clear boundary between the traditional and distance modes, serves different constituents and is involved in distinct activities. Planning plays a vital role in directing these activities based on the distance education system's vision, mission and mandate. Coordinated efforts through constant communication are required for the separate constituents or systems to operate effectively. While there is no consensus on the most appropriate strategy to organise distance education at an institution, there is a need for institutional organisation to provide effective learning and learning support. Some scholars assert that a holistic strategy is most effective in organising distance education and securing student satisfaction (Perraton, 1981), while others support transactional engagement or the systems strategy (Moore and Kearsley, 2011).

Organisation is important because, for students to learn effectively from a distance, the educating institution must be properly planned and organised. As such, institutional organisation sets the learning environment for distance students who are psychologically isolated from their peers and teachers as well as their educational institutions (Lim, 2018) and are thus likely to experience stress. It is therefore important that educators understand distance education systems, their functions and

coordination as the foundation for a favourable learning environment. The distance education institution should undertake needs assessment and set goals before designing specific sub-systems to meet the needs of students and society (Watkin, Kaufman, and Odunlam, 2013). Planning is required to formulate strategies with broadly defined future courses of action (Shivaj University, 2013). A strategic plan should be designed to guide policy formulation and the establishment, coordination and monitoring of systems.

Industrial Education as a Theoretical Lens

The industrial education theory enables researchers to analyse distance education through the lens of operations management such as the division of labour, mass production, economies of scale, and unit cost methodologies (Ramdass and Masithulela, 2016). In order to better understand distance education and the institutional organisation of distance teacher training at Mzuzu University and Domasi College of Education, this article draws on work of Peters as cited in Keegan (2013), Rumble (2006) and Peters (1994).

Peters (Keegan, 2013) argues that, like the industrial production process, distance education requires a number of organisational structures:

> Teaching by printed material requires careful preparation, mechanical reproduction ...organisation for distribution...industrial production processes ...printed course material, radio and television broadcasts merged with developmental procedures and systems approach... in a unique way...to reach as many students as possible. (Keegan, 2013, p. 12)

The similarities between industry and distance education help to explain the nature of the institutional organisation of distance teacher training in order to make suggestions for improvement. Rumble (2006) concurs with Keegan (2013) that distance education as industrial education is characterised by the following Weberian organisation:

> ...division of labour...capital intensive technology...organisation of activities...planning and specifying each work progress to ensure efficient and effective...teaching is broken up into constituent parts...could be undertaken by separate people...mass production become apparent... (Rumble, 2006, pp. 133-134)

This rich description provided a lens through which to engage with the nature of Mzuzu University and Domasi College of Education's

distance education institutional organisation. Peters (1994) stated that industrialised teaching and learning requires:

- o industrial principles for organising the distance education system to improve teaching and learning systems;
- o breaking down activities into different constituents drawing on the combined professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and technical know-how of experts in various disciplines for quality design and production of instructional materials;
- o the use of machinery and mass instruction to replace teachers in educating many students (Peters, 1994).

These ideas assisted us in describing the nature of institutional organisation and analysing the participants' responses to suggest strategies to improve it.

2.   Research Methodology

The larger study posed three research questions, namely, what is the nature of the institutional organisation of the distance secondary school teacher training at Domasi College of Education and Mzuzu University; how does the institutional organisation of the distance secondary school teacher training at Domasi College of Education and Mzuzu University affect student teachers' learning experiences; and why does the institutional organisation of the distance secondary school teacher training at Domasi College of Education and Mzuzu University affect student teachers' learning experiences in the way it does? This article focuses on the first question.

Data Collection Methods

Data were gathered by means of semi-structured in-depth interviews and document analysis. The use of multiple data collection methods enriched and verified the findings while also eliminating errors, leading to triangulation (Yilmaz, 2013). Validation and comparison tools were used to determine accuracy and trustworthiness (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). The respondents, who comprised two instructors and two administrators, were selected due to their practical involvement in the organisation and enactment of distance education for secondary school teacher training. The document analysis covered nine instructional

materials, two strategic plans, a teacher-learner handbook and study circle guidelines.

Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to comprehensively explore the nature of institutional organisation. This enabled probing while creating a favourable environment for the participants to freely air their perceptions, expectations, feelings and experiences (Woods, 2011). The respondents were provided with an outline of the themes that the interviews would cover prior to interviews to help them prepare. The interviews were recorded and lasted approximately an hour and three-quarters.

Document Analysis

Document analysis entails systematic interpretation of documents to give them voice and meaning and to gain empirical knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Bowen, 2009). Instructional and organisational documents were analysed for triangulation and a better understanding of the participants' perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research requires that the researcher interact with participants and enter the "participants' world" (see Anney, 2014, p. 276), calling for him/her to abide by ethical requirements to ensure the participants' safety during the course of and following the study (Yilmaz, 2013). Before commencing the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. Gatekeepers' letters were obtained from the two institutions. The participants signed informed consent forms and they were assured that their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning the participants codes.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed, edited and coded for emerging themes. Data from the documents was also coded to capture emerging patterns of meaning.

3. Results and Discussion

The results show that while educators understand what ODE is, there are differences in the way they organise it. The responses are organised into three categories: distance education systems and their functions, documented plans for distance education and the production of instructional materials. Under the contestations, they mentioned the challenge with ODE policy.

Distance education systems, their functions and coordination

The participants' responses on distance education systems, their functions and coordination are presented and discussed below.

Distance Education Systems

The views of the participants on the existence of a distance education system or unit were similar in the two institutions. One administrator was of the view that distance education systems were established:

> Let me say that in terms of structures we have one structure that was constructed specifically for this purpose and that's where all activities of distance education are managed... But the manager coordinates distance education...we have five departments ... sub-systems as you put it... the guidance and counselling sub-system (is)... functional at the moment. We have the administrative, academic, library and guidance and counselling... the infrastructural sub-system. Administrative sub-system...for the overall running...of ODE...academic is for overall functioning of the ODE and this comprises the office of the university registrar and centre of open and distance learning.

For the administrator in the other institution, the distance unit is the centre for distance activities:

> ...we have the centre that manages distance...we have the director; the overseer of distance education... teacher education manager...manages... coordinates distance education...the centre... (has) several offices. For instance, the director ... resides in that particular building, the teacher manager resides in the same building...we have the printing section where ... the modules are printed, another section where we keep resources or the assignments because...they write assignments when they are off campus and so ... they send their assignments through that particular office that is responsible for handling those assignments... Once the specific lecturers mark the assignments, they take them back to (the) distance office for them to take them back to the students.
>
> Functions and coordination of distance education systems

The administrator in the first institution described the functions and coordination of the identified sub-systems as follows:

> ...the systems run co-ordinately, they run harmoniously... the academics... provide tutorials, teach the students..., guidance and counselling...done by ...the centre for distance learning personnel as academic members of staff. These provide...support to make sure that the students get what they are supposed to get ... we have the library which provides reference materials, reading materials, print and online materials... the infrastructural sub-system... the physical facilities... like classrooms, lecture theatres ...

However, the instructor from the same institution identified traditional departments within the Faculty of Education as sub-systems of the distance training system:

> ...So far all departments within the Faculty of Education contribute to courses that our students are taking...Language department ... Mathematics ...History... Geography..., Theology and Religious Studies... and ETS... where we have Foundation Studies...

Similarly, in the other institution the administrator linked distance education sub-systems with traditional faculties and functions:

> ...we have three faculties... Education, Sciences and Humanities... (in the) College of Education... ... The distance programme ... let's call it ...a mode... of training ... Being fully funded by the Malawi Government, it means the activities are fully supported by the government...when doing our annual budget, we factor in the distance education.

The administrators' responses point to the existence of distance education structures or systems in the two institutions. Mention of a structure specifically for ODE implies that educators understand that the distance mode requires specific amenities. The one administrator's explanation that all distance education activities are conducted in a specific unit indicates that, regardless of being hosted by a traditional institution, distance education is a standalone mode. The administrator in the other institution also cited the existence of a 'centre for distance learning' with a description of the sub-systems and administrators' roles and responsibilities. However, the educators expressed different views. The question was rephrased to capture sub-systems or departments that constitute the distance education unit and the responses either pointed to a muddled system or a blend of traditional or distance departments. This implies that the two institutions did not follow the institutional organisation approaches discussed in the literature, which notes that, as part of planning, "systems for ODL delivery

must be well developed before ODL can be implemented" (Minnaar, 2013, p. 6). The responses show that one administrator was hesitant to mention the sub-systems, signalling flawed knowledge of the composition of the distance education system. The administrator revealed that only the guidance and counselling subsystem was functional, but explained the functions of the named sub-systems which ran parallel to the distance mode's setup that is recommended later in this article. The educators' limited knowledge on the establishment of systems within systems for ODE could negatively impact the growth of the distance mode.

The other administrator linked the sub-systems to traditional faculties and functions. Thus, secondary teacher distance education is a mode of instructional delivery rather than a programme. This implies that there is no need for distance education to receive special attention as it is within the confines of traditional practice. The educator confirmed this view by indicating that the distance mode is factored into the institution's annual budget which is funded by the Malawi Government. Once again, this is not in line with the requirements for planning the establishment of ODE discussed in the literature. It is interesting that the one administrator identified traditional faculties as distance education sub-systems, while the other likewise indicated strong adherence to traditional practices.

The one administrator's identification of student support in the absence of material production sub-systems points to knowledge of the distance mode. However, dividing activities into sub-components implies the existence of systems that cannot be clearly described by their users. For example, based on the tasks and responsible officers the material and student support sub-systems (see Minnaar, 2013; Moore and Kearsley, 2011) could have been included. The educators' failure to identify existing distance education sub-systems and their assigned roles would negatively impact the running and coordination of these important structures. This departs from the norms discussed in the literature. As argued later in this article, distance education as a system should comprise several other autonomous sub-systems or sub-units.

Again, the educators were unable to explain coordination of the sub-systems to promote effective teaching and learning and to provide support for learning and how this process operates. The administrator's reference to tutorials, and guidance and counselling as providing student support suggests the existence of invisible structures or systems that can hardly

be identified by their users. This suggests the existence of unstructured institutional organisation that depends heavily on traditional practices. It departs from the kind of planning recommended in the literature which calls for the establishment of precise systems within systems (see Minnaar, 2013, Moore and Kearsley, 2011, Shivaj University, 2013). It also implies that one of the institutions initiated ODE without establishing supporting sub-systems. The one-size-fits-all mind-set renders it difficult for educators to separate ODE from the traditional systems. The participants' failure to precisely name ODE sub-systems is in contrast to the suggestion that the ODE unit should be systematised into "departments and sub-units... different functions and activities" (Ipaye, 2015, p. 3).

Documented Plans for Distance Education
Both the educators acknowledged that there is a lack of up-to-date guiding documents and developmental plans for distance secondary school teacher training in Malawi. An analysis of the available guiding documents was important to determine the nature of planning for distance education and how this affects students' learning.

Open and Distance Education Policy and Strategic Plan
The participants in both institutions revealed the lack of an ODE policy and strategic plan. One administrator commented:

> ... But the unfortunate part of it is that we don't have an open policy yet... we have the institutional improvement plan as well as the strategic plan and ... they are two documents but they are talking of the same thing.

The educators pointed to the existence of strategic plans for the institutions. One explained:

> ...we have the *strategic plan* that guides us on how distance education is to be delivered. However, we have other supporting documents; for instance, ...policy distance education document which also supports the strategic plan...and a *hand book for distance education*. Again, that one stipulates... how distance education is supposed to be done... the strategic plan is for the whole institution not just distance education...

The administrator at the same institution declared:

> ...strategic plan, that's the main document ... guidelines for facilitation, for assessment, and the general rules for conduct of any student...Our strategic plan finished its term of existence in 2010 and this year we are planning to review the plan. Until then, it's hard to say the exact plan

because it's not yet there but ...we are envisaging a very vibrant distance programme for the country. We are likely to bring in new approaches, new ways of doing things ... because education is growing/developing, and distance education is becoming very popular...

The interviews and document analysis revealed some differences in planning for ODE between the two institutions. Both had a strategic plan for ODE and one an action plan in the form of a handbook. In this institution comprehensive plans for distance education activities such as assessment, instruction, learning strategies and students' conduct were set out in the teacher-learner handbook. An analysis of the handbook revealed that, while they provided comprehensive guidelines for distance learning and learning support, all the plans were outdated. Scrutiny of the institution's obsolete strategic plan confirmed the administrator's claim that the distance mode is budgeted for within a single corporate plan, signifying the one-size-fits-all approach.

The fact that the strategic plan was set for the period ending 2010 implies negligence in reviewing this important document and overreliance on traditional education practices. The institution had been operating for six years without a strategic plan for both traditional education and ODE, implying a lack of direction and failure to respond to students' needs and emerging and contemporary issues. The administrator was of the view that this was due to the lack of a vision and mission statement. Plans are living documents that are socially constructed for a purpose. They require on-going review to ensure they are best serving their target and that they respond to emerging needs (Owen, 2014). The existing plans and related documents have outlived their purpose and relevance since the strategic plan expired in 2010 and the handbook had not been reviewed for 11 years.

There were also inconsistencies, with one institution's obsolete strategic plan solely for traditional education. Furthermore, the administrator's response on a strategic plan for ODE contradicted what was on the ground as the purported ODE guidelines (strategic and improvement plans) were not available for scrutiny. Once again, this implies a lack of planning for ODE, as outdated plans can hardly respond to contemporary and emerging issues. The literature notes that planning should be an on-going process (Shivaj University, 2013; Wren, 2009). Implementing ODE without any guidelines will result in a lack of coordination and consequently, an ineffective division of labour. Developing an ODE strategic plan calls for

SWOT analysis and a clear vision, mission, and goals (Minnaar, 2013; Polk State College , 2012). The lack of such planning implies that ODE in the institution piggybacks on the traditional system, embracing the one-size-fits-all mind-set. As noted in the literature, this prevents educators from embracing innovative practices (Moore and Kearsley, 2011)

Distance Education Developmental Plans and Resource Mobilisation Strategies
The data analysis revealed the lack of a distance education system as well as resource mobilisation strategies to help improve distance education services and promote the institution's growth. One administrator acknowledged:

> ... technologically we can't say, ok will be using tele-conferencing. The college does not have any tele-conference facility but that's what we desire. ...There was a programme by the government of Japan, JICA wanting to improve the infrastructure of the college and we believe when that comes, ... obviously, they said distance education is part and parcel of the programme to embrace those new developments...I can't say it will happen tomorrow or it will happen the day after tomorrow. Some of those plans would have been already implemented by now but the change in the programme ... was supposed to be done in liaison with the Malawi Government....

The administrator from the other institution noted that they were awaiting donor funding:

> We are planning to have four satellite centres ... because we don't use our own teleconferencing centre here ... those centres will be fitted with video teleconferencing facilities. Our plan is that we have a teacher facilitating here, then all these places will be connected and they should be able to listen and attend a particular lecture in Mulanje, Balaka, Lilongwe and Karonga... If technologically that happens to be a challenge ... we may dispatch lecturers to Lilongwe, Balaka and Karonga to attend to the students...We have been privileged; we ... had a Skills Development Project (SDP) grant from World Bank...which ... enabled us to expand in terms of infrastructure...that grant ... enabled us to build the satellite centres... the office complex ... main centre. We will be feeding these satellite centres... the main centre is funded by the...African Development Bank...

The administrator added:

> ...we have activities that increase our (resources) at the end of the day...I mean these have to be done within the prescribed limits as a government institution. ... We can't go against government policy... we support government. ... our core business is not necessarily to make money out of the programme but it is to support the nation... we are not running it as a business.

These responses point to donor dependency and a lack of ODE contingency planning, hindering effectual learning. The lack of technologically advanced facilities in public higher education institutions deepens dependence on external financial support as opposed to grants coupled with institutional resource mobilisation initiatives. One of the administrators expressed the hope that the Japanese government's long term plans for the institution would include distance education which according to him is part and parcel of the parent system. It was surprising that the actual time the JICA programme would commence was not known. Overdependence on the macro system in the form of the Malawi Government highlights distance education's lack of autonomy and delayed development. The one-size-fits-all philosophy and dependency syndrome prevent this sector from being independent, with educators simply following what is prescribed for them. If forthcoming, donor funding would enable the institution to communicate effectively with its students and expand its offerings. Nevertheless, the institution should also take the initiative to mobilise its own resources to sustain this and future projects.

While it is hoped that donor assistance will enhance learning support to students the literature notes that a contingency plan should exist in case this option fails. Total dependency on donors implies a lack of vision and innovation that arises as a result of a lack of planning for ODE. In turn, this reflects identified management and governance challenges in the country's higher education system (Malawi Government, 2008). Resource mobilisation is a central function of management, a component of planning (see Polk State College, 2012; Malawi Government, 2008). Furthermore, the administrator's fears of violating government policy if the institution is involved in resource mobilisation contradicts Malawi's National Education Sector Plan that empowers universities to "develop and implement other programmes to improve quality and efficiency, funded by themselves from their own resources" (Malawi Government, 2008, p. 24) .

Production of Instructional Materials

The educators' knowledge of production of instructional materials was engaged to gauge how instructors develop instructional materials or use media to facilitate student learning. The responses on production

of instructional materials to reach out to students in their localities and promote learning are discussed below.

Pre-planned Instructional Materials

An instructor highlighted the importance of pre-planning mass production of instructional materials:

> ...I don't think that distance education in developing countries like Malawi can materialise without pre-planning... because prior to the recruitment of these students we have to produce enough modules... so before we start offering a course, ... we need to develop modules for that particular course, ... that's when we can recruit.

The other instructor agreed:

> ...For instance ... how many students are we taking in this particular area and that number (is) also ... determined by the resources that we have because before getting the students we have to produce enough modules for ... the candidates we are actually recruiting and ... each course has a module... When a student is in first year, they are supposed to receive all the modules for the first year. Without planning ... they cannot actually get any because they will be using these modules when they are off campus.

Production of Pre-planned Instructional Materials

The data from the interviews and the analysis of the instructional material revealed that the production of instructional materials is done by instructors themselves with no outsourcing or course teams. An instructor explained:

> ...members of staff from the department of education are requested to come up with modules in their areas of professionalization. I happen to be one of those who (are) also requested to write some modules. After writing modules, even if I am not there, any other member of staff can facilitate that particular module as long as he is conversant with that particular topic. So members of staff were requested... we signed a contract...with the open and distance learning, then we wrote the modules, and then they were edited, I understand by our colleagues from other universities like Chancellor College. Later on, changes made and modules produced. So once modules are produced, either the one who wrote the module can facilitate or someone else.

The other instructor was sceptical about outsiders being involved in developing instructional material:

> ... Maybe for refining... just to check the quality of the modules but not the actual development. Maybe once we don't have enough personnel in some ... areas, that's when we can outsource. For instance, I remember, when we were developing modules for Agriculture, we had to consult colleagues

> from Bunda College of Agriculture to assist us in that particular area. But we have got enough lecturers. We produce, we develop the modules on their own but we can actually send them for expert judging to other specialists...

It also emerged that pre-packaged instructional materials were developed prior to recruiting student teachers to the programme. The one instructor was of the view that pre-planned instructions are necessary not only in Malawi, but in all developing nations. The literature notes that developing nations depend on printed material as their primary medium of instruction (Chawinga and Zozie, 2016; Mhishi, Bhukuvhani, and Sana, 2012) . Pre-planned instructions relate to industrialised products and services which even developed nations still value as they adopt innovative techniques for distance teaching. It can thus be argued that, despite the uncertain, poorly designed system, ODE institutions in Malawi achieve mass production of instructional materials for students who are studying at a distance. Instructors develop such materials in their areas of specialisation and outsource for scarce skills.

Recommendations

As noted earlier, the industrial education theory was employed as a lens to explore and understand the nature of the institutional organisation of distance secondary school teacher training in Malawi. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered to improve the institutional organisation of ODE in the country:

Planning for Open and Distance Education

Since the major problem hinges on planning, a key recommendation is thorough planning with the establishment of sub-systems within the distance education system for effective specialisation and division of labour. Plans should be properly communicated and coordinated within the institution and among the systems to keep staff informed. Furthermore, the strategic plan should include resource mobilisation to facilitate growth and sustainability.

Staff Development

Staff should be adequately trained on an on-going basis to develop their knowledge of and expertise in ODE.

Mainstream Open and Distance Education

The Ministry of Education should fully integrate ODE in its plans on the understanding that distance education differs from traditional education in its organisation and enactment.

4.   Conclusion

This article explored the nature of the institutional organisation of distance secondary school teacher training in Malawi. It argued that educators only partially apply distance education knowledge to institutional organisation and that adherence to traditional practices negatively impacts planning and the autonomy of the distance education system. Thorough planning for distance education separate from the traditional mode is recommended as well as on-going staff training. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education mainstream distance education as a distinct mode within dual mode institutions by formulating a clear ODE policy and monitoring its enactment. Furthermore, distance education should be freed from adherence to traditional practices by empowering the sector to mobilise resources and operate as a separate entity.

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