

SUSTAINABILITY INDICES AS MEASURES OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Open and Distance Education if well organized, is an adequate alternative to conventional education. For acceptability of this assertion, the public, governments, employers of labour and other stakeholders need to be convinced that ODL institutions are not providing half-baked education. Also, for the public and other shareholders enthusiasm and interest that are usually hard earned to be sustained, there is need for total commitment to the implementation of some established indices of sustainability. The thrust of this paper is in the appraisal of the extent to which two ODL institutions in Nigeria adhere to the principles of sustainability. A set of questionnaire was developed and used to collect data which were analyzed using simple non-parametric statistics. Suggestions which were aimed at improving the service delivery, in the institutions used for the study in particular, and other sister institutions especially in the developed countries were highlighted.

Keywords: Open and Distance Learning, distance learning institutions, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has come of age so soon. It has metamorphosed from its early confusing stage in terms of what its meaning should be and what it can do to an age in which it has been established as a unique educational discipline as compared to the conventional educational system. Before now, distance education included a wide range of teaching-learning strategies such as correspondence education, home study, independent study, external studies, sandwich programme and part-time studies, among others.

However, with the establishment of the Open University of United Kingdom in 1969 and several others in different part of the globe, it has been widely acknowledged that open and distance education is a form of education that should be recognized as one in which a completely different mode of instructional delivery is utilized in an attempt to provide educational services.

Since 1969, a lot of efforts have been committed to successful implementation of distance learning. All these have, no doubt, yielded dividend. Different and varied forms of models of distance education practice have evolved. It has also produced a lot, in terms of content, strategies and media integration. Open and Distance Education developed a watertight relationship between development in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) and itself to the point that one finds it interesting to study which of the two is actually dragging the other.

In terms of financial commitment, a lot of money has been committed to the provision of open and distance education by nations of the world. The major aspects of open and distance learning where heavy financial commitments are experienced are: course material development (online and off-line), integration of ICT, overhead cost, capital expenditure etc. The rewarding aspect of the finances is high rate of interest in Distance Education by learners and also the ability and opportunity to provide access to education by government floating ODL institutions. This has allowed for existence of distance learning institutions that go with the name – mega universities. These are universities with at least a minimum of one million students. Such universities include: Open University of United Kingdom (OUUK), University of South Africa (UNISA), Indira Ghandi National Open University (IGNOU) among others. With all these good developments happening to the practice of Open and Distance Education, it is ironical to notice some aspects of it that are worrisome. The rate of attrition in distance learning has reached a dimension that is threatening the whole lot of the promises of distance education. Globally, there has been much concern for value for the services rendered not only in education but in all facets of economy. In the face of this, there is economic downtrodden/downturn that has called for stringent management of resources. In the light of this, such concepts like management by objectives, impact study, quality control, quality assurance, total quality management sustainability, and sustainability development have emerged. No doubt, there is a need to take stock especially as regards the practice of DE as a developmental process, a discipline and a solution provider. DE is considered a developmental process in that all its elements are integrative and are still like any process has the potential of integrating new ideas.

As a discipline, DE cannot remain static in the face of new knowledge, approaches, strategies and content building. Results of research findings need to be incorporated to enrich the substance and therefore pave way for a realistic, dynamic and robust DE curriculum.

Distance Education is considered as a solution provided in that it is aimed at assisting the society solve some major problems like: provision of equitable and equality in educational opportunity, eradication of mass illiteracy, eradication of ignorance, diseases and mass empowerment of the people. Attempt is therefore directed in this paper towards carrying out an evaluative study with a view to seeing how far Nigeria has fared in terms of provision of distance education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Distance Education has been an acceptable form of educational system in Nigeria. It has undergone a full stage/process of growth since its first acceptance as correspondence education through its emergent as part-time studies to sandwich programmes and up to its recognition as distance education and the establishment of open and distance learning institutions. In fact, quite a substantial number of Nigerian Universities now operate on dual-mode system. Since the early sixties or thereabout, attentions of researchers have been focused on the different aspects of adult education and the use of mass media/educational broadcasting in education. The works of Aderinoye (2005), Ogunmilade (1989), Adeagbo (2004) and Omolewa (1998) among others are worthy of mention here. However, there seems not to be much work done in the area of evaluation of distance education using the parameters of sustainability indices/indicators. This study therefore sets out to asses the performance of distance learning institutions in Nigeria based on the internationally accepted indices/indicators of sustainability.

Research Questions

The study seeks to find answers to the underlisted research questions:

- 1 Do institutions of open and distance learning in Nigeria aware of concepts of sustainability?
- 2 Do instructions at open and distance learning in Nigeria aware of indices/ indicators of sustainability?
- 3 In what ways have the open and distance learning institutions in Nigeria apply the sustainability indices in their activities?
- 4 What are the hindrances ODL institutions in Nigeria face in the application of sustainability indices?

Purpose of the Study

The study is carried out to specifically:

- 1 Find out the degree of self-evaluation that the Nigerian ODL institutions are doing;
- 2 Find out whether or not the appropriateness or otherwise of the research instrument used to establish sustainability by the ODL institutions in Nigeria;
- 3 Establish the areas/aspects of focus of the ODL institutions in Nigeria when sustainability is being determined;
- 4 Find out the major problems that hinder the process of sustainability in the provision of high quality open and distance learning in Nigeria; and
- 5 Suggest ways by which ODL institutions can be run to assure compliance with sustainability standards.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The thrust of this study is to appraise the extent to which institutions of ODL in Nigeria adhere to the principles and indices of sustainability in their service delivery. Therefore, purposive sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the only two single mode ODL institutions in the country. These are the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) Kaduna and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Lagos.

An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from a cross-section of senior management staff of both institutions. The questionnaire was validated by subjecting it to content and face validity. It also underwent pilot usage by administering it on five (5) senior staff whose responses were not utilized in the final analysis of the data. The questionnaire centred on the major aspects of providing ODL. Thus, the questionnaire addresses various related issues of sustainability in; management and leadership, course material development, ICT, conduct of examinations, partnership, staff development, learner support services, quality assurance etc.

In addition, interviews were conducted with a cross-section of learners, staff and employers of labour. Their views were sought to establish the feelings of the major stakeholders as regards provision of distance education in Nigeria. The data are subjected to non-parametric statistical analysis.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability has overtime, attracted a whole lot of interpretations. The reason for this is not far-fetched. As a concept, it has its early reference on issues relating to Biodiversity and environmental education. However, with UNESCO declaring the years between 2005 and 2015 as Decade for Education for Sustainability, the concept has assumed much relevance not only to environmental and biodiversity issues, but also to education practice. According to Wikipedia –the Free Encyclopaedia (2008), the root-word in sustainability is “sustain” which may mean any or a combination of the following options:

- nourish somebody—to provide somebody with nourishment or necessities of life;
- support something from below—to keep something in position by holding it from below;
- provide somebody with moral support: to keep somebody going with emotional or
- moral support;
- withstand something: to manage to withstand.

Sustainability is regarded as a state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. As an environmental concept, the term sustainability refers to the potential longevity of vital human ecological support systems such as the planet’s climatic system, systems of agriculture, industry, forestry and fisheries. According to KLD (2008), sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. KLD definition has more applicability to open and distance education. It then means that sustainability open and distance education is one in which it is operated to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need.

By implication, sustainability open and distance education is one that is developmental in nature. As Daniels (2004) has opined, the purpose of open and distance learning, at least for COL, is to facilitate sustainability development. He went further to stress the need for sustainability ODL education in his remarks:

"When asked to express it simply, I say that education for sustainable development is about education for development but for development that must be sustainable".

Undoubtedly, sustainability has assumed a dimension that will be difficult to undermine in any educational, socio-economic programmes. The seriousness attached to it has been impacted on many activities of international bodies and organisations like the UNESCO, COL, USAID, etc. A good number of projects and attempts at implementation of innovations had resulted to failure due to lack of potential for sustainability. Daniels (2004) succinctly provides a very good record of such failures. According to him:

Most of those who launched into e-learning during the dot.com fancy of 1999 – 2000 thought that they were going to capture a mass market of learners as the UKOU had done. They failed to do so because they had not thought sufficiently about the demand for the service in the environments that they were working in. They had also failed to note the obvious point that using the mass media tends to bring you mass audiences whereas using individualized media tend to bring you individuals.

In Nigeria, several efforts of integrating new ideas that were not long lasting abound. There were early instances of using the radio and the television to provide education, both at public and institutional level. These attempts were not sustainable.

The idea of the Open University system was first mooted in Nigeria late in the 1970s. By 1983, the Open University bill had been passed into law. And on February 4, 1984, test transmission was started on the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Ogunmilade, 1988). The university was intended to rely heavily on the use of the radio as well as the television. The National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna (NTI) also made early attempts to provide instructions to the students aspiring to obtain their Grade Two Teachers' Certificate through the use of the television and radio broadcasts and textbooks. Today, the NTI is using only tutorial approach of instructional dissemination. It is also on record that the University of the Air which was established in Enugu in Anambra State in 1979 started with instructional radio broadcasting, however, the project has become moribund. Some of the reasons adduced for the abysmal failure of these attempts include: inability of electricity supply, poor financing, and lack of adequate planning among others. It is however encouraging to note with satisfaction the improvements in television broadcasting as exemplified by the NTA and other private TV outfits like the African Independent Television (AIT). The question is whether or not the present level of service delivery will be sustained.

Factors of Success and Sustainability

Daniels (2004) identified six factors of success and sustainability. These are:

- **Clarity of purpose and intention** – By this, he meant that right from the onset, the purpose and the intention for embarking on ODL must be well stated in a very clear, specific and unambiguous manner. This is very important in that it will serve as the background towards other steps to be taken.

The purpose and the intention of the ODL institution must be well known to the chief executive more than anyone else. Central to the success of an institution is the degree at which it is able to achieve the purpose for which it was established. In modern days, the purpose and the intention are expressed in the mission/vision statements.

- **Economic Structure**—Daniels is of the view that any Open University that aspires to be great and provide quality education should be financially buoyant. Some of the first-class ranking Open and Distance Institutions that have achieved high reputations for quality, like the OOUK, IGNOU and the SUKHOTHAI THAMMATHIRA Open University operate at scale. One worthy thing of note is that when open and distance learning institutions are economically viable, they depend less on government. The implication of this is far-fetched. In the developing countries, a lot of ideas and innovations cannot be sustained because most of the institutions depend majorly on government subvention. In a situation where institutions are independent of the government, sustainability is best experienced. This also reduces government intervention in the running of the institutions. In such a situation, creativity, innovativeness and ingenuity is encouraged. A good example of projects in open and distance education that had failed basically as a result of economic non-viability was that of the United States Open University (USOU). Another example was that of the National Open University (NOU) of Nigeria which was first opened in 1983 but had its Act suspended in 1984 only to be resuscitated in 2002.
- **Institutional Structure** – The third factor of sustainability provided by Daniels is institutional structure. According to him, for open and distance institution to record success worthy of being sustained, there is the need for the institution to enjoy institutional autonomy. According to him, the failure of the Quebec’s Tele-universite to enjoy institutional autonomy was the greatest factor for its failure.
- **Leadership**—Another major ingredient of sustainable open and distance learning is an effective and efficient leadership especially at the foundation years. Good leadership, according to Daniels is also crucial at a time of change. Good leadership has the potential of revitalizing and reenergizing institutions that are moribund and less functional. We cannot but mention names of leaders of Open and Distance Learning institutions whose achievements have been considered landmarks in the running of ODL institutions in different parts of the world. Again, the names are mentioned by Daniels who himself, to say the least, is a respectable name in the management of ODL at the university and international levels. The names include: Walter Perry at the UKOU, Wichit Srisa An at STOU in Thailand, Ram Reddy at both the Andhra Pradesh OU now Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, (BRAOU) and IGNOU, India, Raj Dhanarajan, Dominique Abrioux, Prof. Surabhi among others. Good leadership provides an enabling environment to allow for the institution to achieve the purpose for which it was established. Thus, a good leader is an embodiment of talent, vision, energy, resources and commitment to achieve targets and in fact goes beyond attaining the maximum capacity of the system. We want to add that good leadership should be able to inspire the subordinate, mentor them and encourage them to work together as a team so that collectively they work towards making the system a success.

More importantly, it is the responsibility of a good leader to appoint right people to occupy right positions. In a situation where all these are absent, the leadership becomes weak, inactive, insensitive and may risk failure.

- **An Effective and Balanced Teaching and Learning System** –This meant provision of high quality education that satisfies the aspirations of the learners to the extent that they wish to come back to the institution for further studies and feel proud to recommend the institutions to others who are seeking for knowledge. In order to achieve this, there is the need to provide interesting and high quality study materials, effective student support and good logistics, perfect conduct of examinations and almost immediate knowledge of results in assignments and terminal examinations, hitch-free registration and effective tutorials where they are provided. Promptness, flexibility, alertness are some of the actions to be taken to ensure that teaching and learning system is not only effective and balanced but sustainable.
- **Intellectual Excitement** –Daniels is of the view that “students will enjoy their institution, and help to make it sustainable, if they find their studies intellectually or practically exciting”, To achieve intellectual excitement goes beyond accumulation of facts from the textbooks. Students should be made to realize that education they are receiving is to act as a change factor and as a catalyst which should propel them to become more enlightened by making them realize that they are entitled to almost unlimited opportunities. It should build confidence in them and spur them to face challenges of life.

The UNESCO (2005) suggested some key elements to achieve sustainability especially at the national level. Although, these elements are focused at the attainment of sustainability at the national level, they however have many semblances to the submission of Daniels (2004). The key elements are:

- **Leadership**
- **Government Structure**
- **Administrative Support**
- **Human Resources**
- **Financial Resources**
- **Operating Procedure**
- **Accountability**
- **Evaluation, Tracking and Reporting**
- **Vision-building, and**
- **Engagement and Retention.**

Content of Sustainability

It is necessary to say here that sustainability is a content-laden concept. Sustainability is not done in a vacuum.

Therefore, what is to be sustained must be identified and indeed judged to be extremely valuable and worthy of being sustained. In terms of open and distance learning, even though there are variant of operations and practices; however, certain elements seem to have general applicability. These are what we want to term as content of sustainable ODL. These are:

- Available programmes in the system;
- Available courses in a programme;
- Leadership styles;
- Examination systems;
- Learner support systems;
- Information and communication technology system;
- Local and international collaborations;
- Study centre management;
- Management of Senate and other institutional committees;
- Academic culture;
- Accounting system;
- Registry systems;
- Admission / registration and convocation system;
- Award of degrees and certificate system;
- Library system;
- Study material publication system.

The issue of the worth of what is sustainable leads us naturally to the consideration of such related concepts like: Quality Assurance (QA), Quality Control (QC), Total Quality Management (TQM) and Sustainability. According to UNESCO (2003):

'Quality has become a dynamic concept that has constantly adapt to a world whose societies are undergoing profound social and economic transformation. Encouragement for future oriented thinking and anticipation is gaining importance. Old notions of quality are no longer enough ...despitet

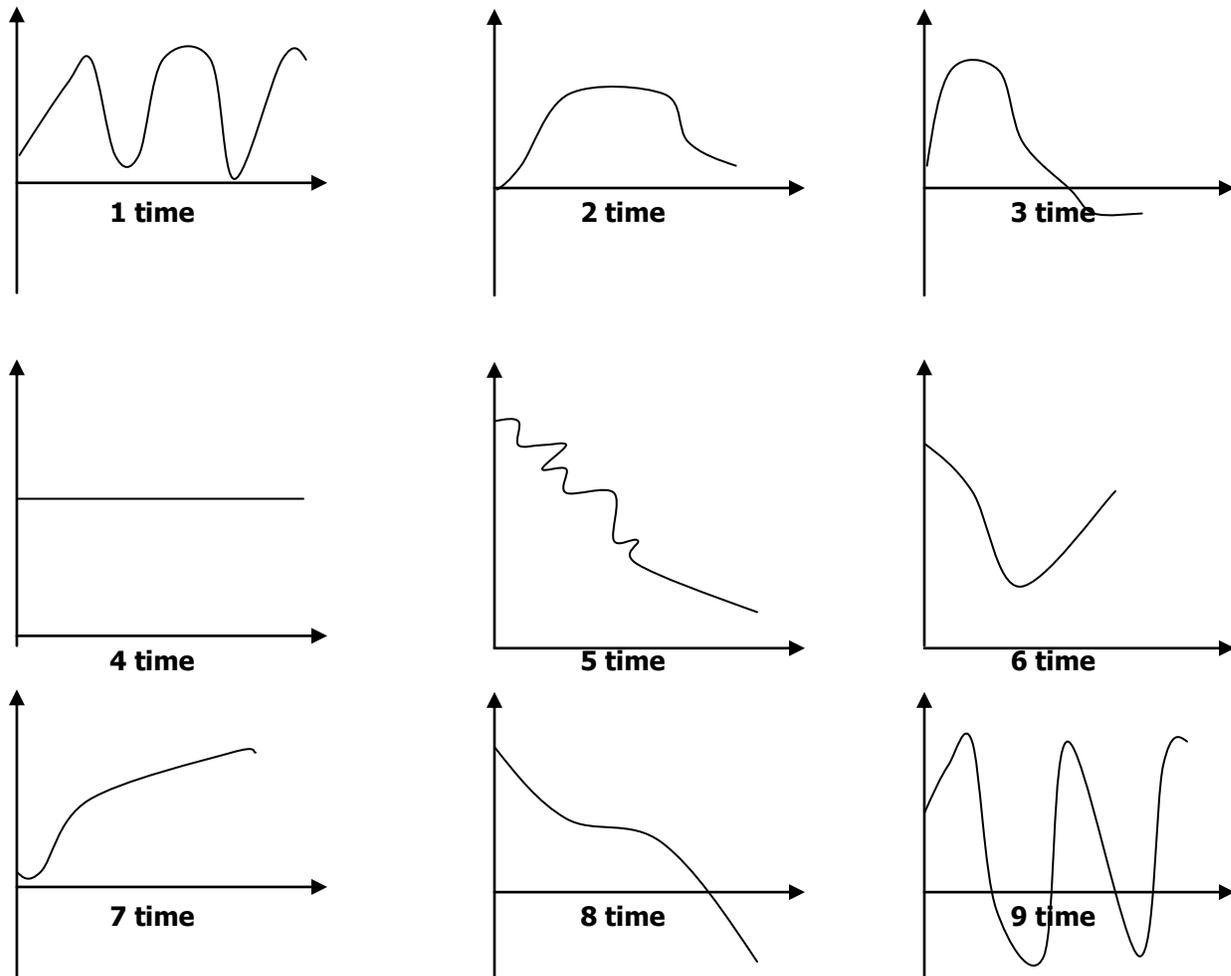
contents, there are many common elements in the pursuit of a quality education, which should equip all people, women and men, to be fully participating members of their own communities and also citizens of the world". (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1).

Quality is the characteristic of the products and services an organisation offers. Quality in ODL programme thus means quality of graduates it produces and quality of learning experiences it provides. Quality Assurance according to Ogunsanya and Monant, (2007) is a deliberately planned and systematic process of determining and ensuring that adequate and acceptable standards, scholarship, human and material infrastructure are put in place, maintained and enhanced. Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) asserted that quality assurance "refers to the determination of standards, appropriate methods and quality requirements by an expert body, accompanied by a process of inspection or evaluation that examines the extent to which practice meets these standards".

From these various definitions of quality assurance, it becomes apparent that the major concern of quality assurance is determination and enforcement on the part of an organization to meeting up with the set quality standard as a means of satisfying the clients or the consumers of the product or service.

Quality Assurance is the set of activities that an organization undertakes to ensure that standards are specified and measures taken to avoid faults (Mohan, 2007). Quality Control refers to the physical efforts of an organization to ensure compliance with the quality assurance principles. Quality control is the actualization of the compliance to the set standards. It involves reactive measures taken and audit of procedures.

Total Quality Management, on the other hand, is the systematic management of an organisation's customer-supplier relationship in such a way as to ensure sustainability, steep-sloped improvements in quality performance. Sustainability refers to the ability of an organisation to sustain quality performance over time. Not all ODL institutions can. There are cases of ODL institutions who succeeded in making significant gains in one year, only to find out that they are back to square one in the rest. Others go for several years with gradually improving performance, and then have a major setback. Below are possible patterns of institutional performance in terms of sustainability/TQM over time:



Source:

Murgatroyd Stephen and Morgan Collins, Open University Press, Buckingham, Philadelphia, p. 62.

Education for Sustainability

Sustainability has its roots in the declaration of Human Rights which assures everyone the right to basic education. Four decades after, precisely 1989, at the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), it was declared that primary education should be compulsory and available free to all. The convention also emphasized non-exclusion of enjoying any right by all children as a result of race, sex, disability and economic status.

The right to primary education by every child was reinforced in 1990 at the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) when it was declared that "basic education should be provided to all children, youths and adults". Gender inequality is to be eradicated in all levels of education by year 2015.

Education is therefore regarded as an obvious workable strategy for all these to be achieved. To making this possible, emphasis is being placed on the roles that the ODL can play in eradicating poverty, ignorance, providing access, equalizing and providing equitable educational opportunities. According to UNESCO (2004), education is held to be central to sustainability. Indeed, education and sustainability are inextricably linked, but the distinction between education as we know it and education for sustainability is enigmatic for many.

Education for sustainability development must be based on ideals and principles that underlie sustainability, such as, intergenerational equity, gender equity, social tolerance, poverty alleviation, environmental preservation and restoration, natural resource conservation and just and peaceable societies. All these are what DE is out to achieve. Indeed, if there is any educational system capable to achieve the ideals and principles of sustainability, that system is ODL.

Wedemeyer (1977) used the terms "open learning, distance education and independent study synonymously. However, he prefers to use the word independent study. According to him

Independent study consists of the various forms of teaching-learning arrangements in which teachers and learners carry out their essential tasks and responsibilities apart from one another, communicating in a variety of ways. Its purposes are free from on-campus or external learners with the opportunity to continue learning in their own environments, and developing in all learners the capacity to carry on self-directed learning, the ultimate maturity required of the educated person.
(p. 15).

According to Dohman (1977), distance education "is a systematic organised form of self-study in which student counselling, the presentation of learning material and securing and supervising of students' success is carried out by a team of teachers each of whom has responsibilities. It is made possible at a distance by means of media which can cover long distances". Two common features in the two definitions are self-study and the use of instructional media. Holmberg (1981) is of the view that distance education is the various forms of study at all levels which are not under continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms on the same premises, but which, nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organization. Open learning, on the other hand, refers to the general philosophical operational foundation of Distance Education. Open education therefore refers to a system of education that does not operate through traditional conventions which are essentially restrictive in nature. By inference, open education is that which removes all barriers or restrictions to having all those who are interested in acquiring education to do so. With open education, such philosophical concepts such as free-education, equity and equality of educational opportunities are not only feasible but are indeed possible. In an attempt to operate ODE to achieve this philosophical view, it becomes imperative for the managers and other operatives within the system to introduce the principle of flexibility so as to avoid running ODL institutions by using the traditional approach.

WHY SUSTAINABILITY IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

There are reasons for the global concern for sustainability development. There is a very clear need for shifting of consumption and production patterns of industrialized, emerging and low-income countries. This shift or transition according to Lara and Carlo (2008) will have to respond to the challenges of radical reduction of resources consumption and emissions, not to mention socio-ethical aspects such as poverty reduction and increase of well being. Further Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) provided four major reasons why QA has become so important aspect of all seriously and business minded organisations. These four reasons are considered relevant and applicable to the adoption of sustainability development approach. The reasons are:

- **Costs and demands for educational provision by the public purse are outstripping the available revenue;**
- **Tax payers are eager to know what they are benefiting from what they are paying for;**
- **Parents and governments have been re-defining the range of what they expect schools to do for the school learners, and**
- **Government and influential groups in society increasingly expect schools to play their part in national and international economic competitiveness.**

Baker (1990) remarked that "there is an epidemic of quality worldwide which if you don't catch it may mean you are not in business in ten years' time. We are of the opinion that any service that is not sustainable may sooner than later gone into extinction.

Indices/Indicators of Sustainability

Indicators are as varied as the types of systems they monitor. Sustainability Measures (2008) opines that sustainability indicators are generally quantifiable and not the same thing as an indicator which is generally not quantifiable, but just a vague clue. However, there are certain characteristics that effective indicators have in common. These are:

- **effective indicators are relevant, that is, they show you something about the system you need to know;**
- **effective indicators are easy to understand even by people who are not experts;**
- **effective indicators are reliable, that is, you can trust the information that the indicator is providing, and**
- **effective indicator is based on accessible data, that is, the information can be gathered while there is still time to act.**

The four characteristics of an indicator above are in-line with the one that was designed and used by the Australian Government tagged "National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development (NSED) in 2002. According to the report of the NSED Committee, all the indicators designed for the project are:

- **relevant to NSED's objectives**
- **scientifically and statistically credible;**
- **sensitive to change;**
- **reliant on data which are already available in other contexts, and**
- **reasonably easy to understand.**

Suffice it to mention here that the sustainability indices used in this study were designed to meet up with the five criteria used by the NSESD. In open and distance learning system, the general indices or parameters by which sustainability could be assessed would include, among others, finding out whether or not the system is:

- meeting the aspirations and expectations of the society, that is, finding out whether the institution is focused as regards its activities being geared towards realization of
- the objectives for which the institution was established;
- meeting the aspirations and expectations of the labour market;
- meeting the aspirations and expectations of the individual students;
- meeting the aspirations and expectations of the global community including
- international organisations / bodies that are deeply committed to the promotion of distance learning.

ODL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) Lagos

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was established on the 22nd Jul, 1983 as a springboard for open and distance learning in Nigeria (NOUN, 2006). Almost a year later, precisely on the 25th April, 1984, the Act establishing the University was suspended by the then Military Government.

The University was never to be re-opened until 1st January, 2002 by the then civilian administration.

Thus the National Open University made a history of being one of the few open universities that were first established, closed down and re-opened again.

NOUN remains till date, the only federal government established single-mode tertiary institutions in Nigeria dedicated to quality open access education through distance learning.

As succinctly put by Jegede (2006), NOUN is set-up "towards taking the distance out of education for many Nigerians who would not normally have the opportunity to study through the conventional mode face-to-face, full-time study".

National Teachers' Institute (NTI)

The National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna was established in 1976 with the mandate of providing in-service education for teachers through Distance Learning system.

The NTI, has since its establishment been running programmes leading to the award of Grade II Teachers Certificates, Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) and of recent Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

More information on NOUN and NTI as ODL institutions in Nigeria, particularly, those aspects that are related to sustainability development shall form the basis of the analysis done herein.

FINDINGS

Table: 1
Availability of Sustainable Elements

S/ N	Sustainable Elements	Institutions			
		NOUN		NTI	
		Available	Not Available	Available	Not Available
1.	Vision, Mission Statements	√		√	
2.	Curriculum	√		√	
3.	Learner Support Unit	√		√	
4.	Study Materials	√		√	
5.	Internal Efficiency Unit	√		√	
6.	External Efficiency Unit	√		√	
7.	Study Centres	√		√	
8.	Tutorial Facilitation	√		√	
9.	Examination/Evaluation	√		√	
10.	Staffing (Academic/Non-Academic)	√		√	
11.	Sufficient Budget Records	√		√	
12.	Centre Managers	√		√	
13.	ICT Unit	√		√	
14.	Publishing Unit	√		√	
15.	Programmes on Offer	√		√	

From Table: 1 it is revealing that all the 15 sustainable elements are available in both the institutions used for the study. This is considered a good development as it portends good enabling environment for ODL to thrive in Nigeria.

However, the availability of the sustainability elements may not guarantee their being sustained.

Naidu (2004) warns that it is erroneous to assume that quality (sustainability) is guaranteed on the assumption of availability of quality (sustainability) indicators. He cited with example of the acquisition of academic qualifications of teachers as well as the use of established criteria in the production of study materials.

According to him, it may be wrong to assume that the quality is guaranteed on the academic qualifications of teachers.

This is not essentially true as the presence of required number of qualified teachers need not always ensure effective learning process in the classroom.

Also, course materials developed mechanically following ID template as well as adequate opportunity for learner support need not necessarily lead to effective teaching.

Table: 2
Staff Evaluation of Sustainability Elements in NOUN and NTI

S/ N	Sustainable Elements	Institutions			
		NOUN		NTI	
		Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory
1.	Vision, Mission Statements	√		√	
2.	Curriculum	√		√	
3.	Learner Support Unit		√		√
4.	Study Materials		√	√	
5.	Internal Efficiency Unit		√		√
6.	External Efficiency Unit		√	√	
7.	Study Centres Management		√	√	
8.	Tutorial Facilitation		√	√	
9.	Examination/ Evaluation	√		√	
10.	Staffing (Academic/Non-Academic)		√		√
11.	Finance		√		√
12.	Centre Managers		√		√
13.	ICT Unit		√	√	
14.	Publishing Unit		√		√
15.	Programmes on Offer		√		√
16.	Local Content of Materials/ICT Software	√		√	

In order to further probe deeper into the responses of the respondents, the option to provide reasons was provided.

Find below, few of the reasons given. This shall be done on institutional and item by item analysis. However, only items with negative responses shall be our focus of report.

NOUN
Learner Support

- Although each study centre has for now at least 2 student counsellors, they are not
- enough to cater for the services of our overwhelming students.
- Student counsellors are made to do more administrative work; thus, it does not make
- them to be effective in terms of performing their primary task of counselling and
- guidance. In fact, most of what they do better are on guidance and not counselling.

NTI

Learner Support

- I We the NTI facilitators combine counselling with facilitation and as many of us are not specialists in that area, guidance is done on the basis of our individual
- experiences.
- Not much of learner support is attended to as there is no separate unit for that at the NTI study centres across the nation. Students hardly request for guidance and
- counselling services.

NOUN

Study Materials

- Although the quality of study materials is considered to be very high, the quantity of study materials available is not adequate.
- I think the most outstanding problem confronting NOUN is that of unavailability of study materials.
- I wonder what the university is doing to make study materials available.
- Many of us are getting fed up with the situation of study materials in this university.
- This has made many of the students to either stay longer in their programmes or withdraw from the university.
- Although, the university is making efforts to get study materials available for use of students but more efforts need be put into it.

NOUN

Internal Efficiency

- We have only SERVICOM Unit with emphasis on attendance rather than total quality control of the entire sections of the university.
- There seems not to be consistent internal efficiency system put in place. It is like a trial and error kind of internal efficiency mechanisms. This is attainable from the staff by command through both administrative and the management style and not through coercion. I can give examples

NTI

Internal Efficiency

- The Federal Government directive on service delivery, put simply SERVICOM is in
- place but it is not as effective as expected. Something drastic has to be done especially at the State Offices. However staff are trying.
- Much still needed to be done in this area of personnel management.

NOUN

External Efficiency

- We are expecting NUC to accredit our programmes very soon.
- NOUN is well known all over the world.
- Externally, we need to feel the pulse of all stakeholders particularly the employers of labour for us to really say that we are externally efficient as a university.

However, not much has been done in this regard, may be because the university is still young.

NTI

External Efficiency

- Whereas, we are making efforts to carry along all the stakeholders on matters like: curriculum development, course material development, marking of scripts etc. we still have cases of our products being discriminated against when it comes to appointment.

NOUN

Tutorial Facilitation

- The report reaching us indicates that many of our facilitators engage themselves in teaching and not providing tutorial facilitation. The appointed facilitators are quite competent.

NTI

Tutorial Facilitation

- Appointment of tutorial facilitators is done by the Centre Managers though we have internal monitoring system of the Study Centres. Generally, the Centre Managers are closer to them than those of us at the Headquarters. However, if we want to go by the quality of certificates, we have competent hands for tutorial facilitation.

NOUN

Learner Support

We are grossly understaffed here. This has made us particularly the academic staff to be overboarded with work. You need to note that academic responsibilities in Open and Distance Learning institutions are overwhelming than the conventional system. We definitely need more staff.

Finance

NOUN We have been experiencing a lot of problems especially in the areas of course material development and provision of ICT related facilities and equipment both at the Headquarters and Study Centres because of problem of finance. I think it is high time government provided enough fund to the university to enable her achieve the objectives for which it was established.

NTI

Although the Federal Government is actually trying in terms of financing the institutions, however, more financial assistance is required.

Management of Study Centres

NOUN Centre Managers are working at cross purpose in relation to the aspiration and objectives of the Headquarters.

Although the Centre Managers seem to be putting in their best, their efforts are still not satisfactory. I doubt if our Study Centre Managers open their e-mail boxes on daily basis as expected.

ICT Unit

NOUN The number of personnel is not commensurate with the volume of work at the Headquarters; therefore, there are series of requests and complaints from students in particular. Our e-learning unit should be made to perform.

NTI By now, we should have started delivery of instructions through the INTERNET as a distance learning provider.

Publishing Unit

NOUN Candidly, the Course Materials Development Unit (an arm of Directorate of Instructional Resources Development) is really trying but much still has to be done.

We need to have our own internal yet functional publishing outfit that can match the best in Africa at least. This I believe will help fasten processing of study materials and probably reduce cost.

Programmes on Offer/Management

NOUN There seems to be too many programmes on offer – it is like we are biting more than we can chew. There seems also to be lack of coordination among various schools and some academic units. Learner Support Unit may ask for particular information without carrying other academic units along. Long after providing the required data, each of these other academic units will come for similar requests thus duplicating functions. This kind of lopsided arrangement is not only demoralizing but equally debilitating.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to allow for meaningful sustainability development of ODL in Nigeria, the following are offered as suggestions:

- ODL institutions in Nigeria should continue to address themselves strictly to the vision and mission statements.
- Programme curriculum must be regularly reviewed to accommodate new knowledge and reflect societal dynamic needs.
- The learner support unit should be strengthened both in personnel and working tools. Institutions that don't have the learner support as a separate unit may wish to reconsider their decisions.
- Study materials are the backbone of any ODL institution especially those who regard it as the major source of instructional delivery. They should be provided with strict compliance to such ideals like–learner friendly, recency of content, validity of content etc. Students should not be made to suffer before they receive study materials. Adequacy of study materials in each of the study centres must be properly ensured.
- In order to ensure high quality tutorial facilitation, qualified staff should be engaged while efforts should be made to ensure compliance with facilitation principles rather than lecturing/teaching.
- The sanctity of examination ethics are essential to acceptance of degrees and certificates awarded by the ODL institutions, therefore efforts should be made to conduct acceptable examinations and Tutor-Marked Assignments.
- The efforts of the ODL institutions used for the study in the integration of local content is good for sustainability development. This should be encouraged.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided an insight into some degree of compliance to sustainability indices by two of the main ODL institutions in Nigeria as perceived by the institutional staff.

The findings are quite revealing and hopefully, the suggestions if implemented will help in achieving a sustainable ODL practice in Nigeria and serve as lesson to other upcoming ODL institutions worldwide.

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