

From the Editor-in-Chief

This edition, which represents the sixth edition of the West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning (WAJOFEL), attests to the fact that this distance learning journal is here to stay and has continued to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in academic communities in Nigeria, West Africa and globally. In spite of the fact that this edition is coming out later than we had anticipated, the papers therein are no less stimulating and informative. The Editorial Board continues to strive for a more vibrant and professional production of editions of the journal one after another. The Board is ever ready and committed to take the journal to a higher level and expand its reach. WAJOFEL remains one of the few scholarly, peer-reviewed journals in West Africa that are primarily devoted to open and distance learning and for the advancement of knowledge in this specialised field.

It is gratifying and heart-warming to note that the West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning (WAJOFEL) has continued to enjoy greater reckoning and acceptance within academic communities beyond the shores of Nigeria. When viewed in relation to the short history of the journal, this development can be further appreciated and celebrated. However, since the appointment of the Editorial Board of the journal, the task of keeping the journal afloat and sustaining its vibrancy and visibility has been made less of a challenge but more of a stimulating experience for all. Our expectation and aspiration is that WAJOFEL will continue to be one of the preferred outlets for research-based ODL papers, which will be within the reach of those who are actively engaged in ODL research in higher institutions in the West African sub-region and elsewhere.

It is instructive to bring to the attention of its readers and other stakeholders the fact that since the launch of WAJOFEL about four years ago, authors of articles published by the journal have so far done so at no cost; in other words, they have not been asked to pay page charges or processing fees for their papers. It goes without saying that the cost of publication must have been passed on to certain organisations, which have been taking up financial burden of sustaining the journal. The two organisations which have so far borne the full cost of publishing WAJOFEL up till now are the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the National Open University of

Nigeria (NOUN). It is unlikely that this can go on indefinitely, largely because cost of publication is ever-increasing, which is a global phenomenon. The only option left will be to ask authors to pay certain charges to defray at least a fraction of the cost of production. Consequently, the Editorial Board of WAJOFEL will be introducing payment of page charges by authors of accepted manuscripts to be published in subsequent editions. A nominal page charge will apply beginning from Volume 4, Number 1 of the journal. Details of this can be found under “Instruction to Authors” on the inside back cover.

Prof. Vincent Ado Tenebe
Editor-in-Chief

About RETRIDAL

The Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) is an international institute established under a collaborative agreement between the Commonwealth of Learning and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). It is mainly for capacity building and research in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) for the West African sub-region, and anywhere in Africa when needs arise.

The primary purpose of the institute is in three broad but interrelated parts: first, the institute has the mandate to plan and implement programmes to meet the training and capacity development needs of practitioners of open and distance learning - administrative, technical/technological and academic - within the West African sub-region. Second, the institute is mandated to initiate, carry out, and support research in all areas of open and distance learning and its ancillary fields. While the institute facilitates research into open and distance learning as a field of enquiry, it is also involved in promoting discipline-based researches which have implications for open and distance learning. In doing this, the institute is expected to provide necessary training in research and provide support to early career researchers and experienced academics to pursue their research. The institute is also required to provide opportunities for the dissemination of research outcomes through its dedicated website, newsletter and regular journal.

The third strand of RETRIDAL's mandate is to serve as a platform for intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation and linkages between open and distance learning institutions, organisations and professional associations in West Africa and the rest of the world.

RETRIDAL is physically housed within the National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos.

The vision of the institute is to be seen as a centre of excellence in open and distance learning in the West African sub-region through the promotion of workable policies, development of accountable strategies, the promotion of useful research activities and the initiation of network and collaboration for the purposes of attaining excellence in open and distance learning.

To achieve its mandate, the institute has been focusing on meeting the training needs of open and distance learning institutions including single mode, dual mode, consortium and solely electronic mode in the West African sub-region. This way, it intends building a network of open and distance learning trainers and core of professionals in ODL in the sub-region.

More than twenty-four institutions have participated in various RETRIDAL activities from The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria and Tanzania over the last few years to respond to various needs. Many more are expected to participate in the coming years. The feedback from many of the institutions as well as individual participants has been very encouraging.

The institute has its activities supervised by an International Advisory Board with members from the Commonwealth of Learning and the West African sub-region.

From the Managing Editor

We have the pleasure of producing the Volume 3 Number 2 of the West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning, WAJOFEL. This is the last number for this volume as we continue to reach out to stakeholders concerning research studies in ODL in the West African sub-region.

We are indeed very grateful to the Commonwealth of Learning, COL, for her support through the funding of the publication of this edition of the journal. This has really ensured the sustenance of the journal. We also acknowledge the readiness to offer support at all times by the Management of the National Open University of Nigeria. It is also worthy to thank our numerous readers for their feedbacks. It confirms that the journal is working in tandem with all other ODL crusaders in the West African sub-region.

We thank our various reviewers for their prompt response to our review requests. The fact remains that ODL is growing in the sub-region.

This edition of the journal contains ten papers covering various research areas. The edition parades rich research information for practitioners in open and flexible learning based on existing theory and practice-driven solutions to identified problems.

I. F. Adu, I. O. Salawu, O. D. Ojo, J. Inegbedion and R. Ogidan wrote on open learning, distance education and transformative learning as agenda for action and the challenges involved. The paper was based on the peculiarity of the ODL system as opposed to the more familiar conventional mode of education. It linked ODL to cooperative learning, reciprocal learning and the Jigsaw. The authors presented a conceptual analysis of transformation and broke its processes down to first-order thinking, meta-cognition and transformative learning. Best practices in the use of transformative learning for Open Learning and Distance Education were enumerated alongside instructive guidelines for educators and adult learners. The paper also discussed five challenges associated with transformative learning and the cost implication. Recommendations were made to relevant stakeholders towards effective use of transformative learning and improved learning outcomes.

Maureen N. Chukwu determined the impact of the use of mobile phones on use of mobile learning technology and environmental friendliness among 30 male automobile apprentices and 30 female hair dressing apprentices in Iwaya community in Lagos, Nigeria. The author also investigated the moderating effect of gender on the dependent variables. The apprentices' knowledge of mobile phone learning increased significantly at the end of the training and the participants associated the use of mobile phone with environmental friendliness at the end of the project than they did before. It was reported that gender produced significant difference between the usefulness of mobile phone learning in enhancing environmental friendliness of male and female apprentices. Recommendations for the use of mobile phone as a means of enhancing environmental friendliness and for opportunities to engage in other activities that involve mobile learning were made.

F. K. Olakulehin and O. D. Ojo appraised the face-to-face interaction in open and distance learning system in Nigeria. In the paper, the authors traced the history of ODL in Nigeria to the colonial era when correspondence programmes of foreign institutions were mounted. Some of the challenges faced by students who study without the face-to-face interactions with the teachers were enumerated while the various shades of face-to-face interactions available were x-rayed in the paper. The case was made for the adoption of sustainable approaches to ODL interaction in developing countries.

J. Timothy and T. Owolabi studied the influence of learning styles on male and female science education distance learning students of NOUN and their attitudes towards E-Learning. They premised the study on the peculiarity of e-learning mode and individual differences among learners especially as it relates to their learning styles. They found that although the main effects of learning styles and gender were not significant, there was a significant relationship between distance learners' attitude to e-learning and their learning styles. The authors advocated teachers' adequate attention to the different needs of distance learners.

Charity A. Okonkwo and Ursula N. Akanwa assessed tertiary teachers' capacity development need in test- item writing using selected dual mode institutions in the West African sub-region as cases in point. The authors discussed the rights of individual citizens to quality education and the need for the measurement of quality. The study involved forty academics from twelve dual-mode tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Sierra Leone who attended the train-the-trainers workshop on instructional material development for open and distance learners. Findings showed that the tertiary teachers lacked knowledge of item- writing in aspects that are mostly used as instruments for assessment at the tertiary level of education. The study reported an urgent need for capacity building of tertiary teachers in test item- writing, especially in constructing essay test items requiring higher order thinking skills, multiple choice test items and completion test items.

Chibuogwu V. Nnaka discussed open and distance learning as a veritable tool for enhancing gender equality in higher education. The paper exhumed and presented valuable data on gender disparity in admission and enrolment in Nigerian universities to the effect that women are disadvantaged. The usefulness of the ODL system in increasing women's access to education was emphasised. Findings presented revealed that the flexibility inherent in ODL, low cost of studying by ODL and the desire to attain gender equality are some of the major socio-economic factors that positively influence the enrolment of women into NOUN higher education programmes. The author recommended efforts that should be made towards improving women's access to ODL in NOUN.

G. C. Job explored the integration of information communication technology into teaching and learning activities as a panacea to Nigeria's educational system for 21st century challenges. This paper presented the place of ICT in the present age and the essential role it plays in education. Several studies earlier carried out on the use of ICT in Nigerian educational system were reviewed to shed light on availability, accessibility, utilisation and the extent to which teachers possess the skills and competencies for integration of ICT in their teaching. The author, relying on statistics that reveal poor School Certificate Examinations performance of students in selected science subjects, recommended specific strategies for effective integration of ICT in classroom teaching.

C. M. Amini and I. O. Salawu investigated the perceptions of students and staff of the National Open University of Nigeria on the quality of online instructional delivery strategy. The evaluative study posited that the use of the online course delivery system and the accompanying tutor- marked assignments cuts across diverse climes and has been in use in NOUN since inception. The changing roles of the online instructor as well as the need for effective interaction and active engagement in the process were also enumerated. Results reported on the students and staff involved showed that online instruction/leaning is a feasible and viable alternative to the face-to-face delivery system in the face of increasing shortage of space and manpower to cater for increasing demand for higher education. Several web-based formats for instruction in the online environment such as the asynchronous and the synchronous interactive online learning strategies, among others were recommended.

Funke Susan Apata assessed lecturers' knowledge of social network media and highlighted relevant implications for accessibility and usability need in open and distance education. The author stressed the necessity for open and distance learning and the need for acquisition of knowledge and skills for driving the processes involved in the technology-based approach to learning. The study surveyed one single mode and one dual mode university lecturers' knowledge of social network media as a prerequisite for effective accessibility and usability development in distance learning. Findings reported are that: Facebook was the social network media that lecturers knew most about; lecturers from different areas of specialisation were equally knowledgeable in social network media; and the lecturers generally had little knowledge towards social network media. The study concluded that ODL lecturers' knowledge of social network media can position them to have understanding of standards associated with each of the media thereby contributing to accessibility and usability by the learners.

U. S. A. Osuji reported on a study of learners' perception of National Open University of Nigeria's online assessment courseware usability. The author discussed the popularity of ODL within a short span of time and the delivery of distance learning instructional content and assessment via the online courseware or platforms. Of the two categories of stakeholders that determine the usability of online assessment courseware viz: the learners and

the teachers, the study investigated learners' perception. In the study, a typical model of assessment courseware usability consisting of fundamental component, appearance component and information presentation component was adopted. It was reported that the assessment courseware used by NOUN for the assessment of the learners has all the usability properties. The perception of learners, as reported, further revealed that the assessment courseware used in NOUN is effective, user-friendly and usable. It was recommended that the study needed to be replicated in other NOUN study centres apart from Umudike and Owerri, where this particular study was carried out.

Prof. Vincent Babatunde Ogunlela
Managing Editor

