

WEST AFRICAN JOURNAL OF OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING (WAJOFEL)

Aims and Scope

West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning exists to facilitate and encourage high quality scholarship on important theoretical and empirical work in Open and Distance Learning, ODL, research as well as research in all disciplines that could be taught and learnt by the open and distance learning approach. Researches in the Sciences and Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, etc, are therefore equally encouraged, especially those whose findings have identifiable implications for Open and Distance Learning. ODL is a rapidly developing discipline, which encourages teachers and learners of all disciplines to think of alternative modes of content delivery, alternative to the conventional face to face methods, particularly for purposes of expanding access to the discipline, hence there is need for all disciplines to research into the best ways of applying the ODL philosophy.

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WAJOFEL is published twice a year, July and
January, the two numbers in the year make a
Volume. Subscription, \$30. per Volume. Please
contact Managing Editor for information on
subscriptions. (Contact: wajofel@gmail.com).
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From the Editor in Chief

I proudly present to you this Maiden Edition of the West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning (WAJOFEL). The idea of establishing and publishing a regional journal solely dedicated to the growing field of open and distance learning was mooted and conceived by the National Open University of Nigeria in 2004. However, it was not until 2008 that a complete editorial board was constituted and it commenced laying the policy framework and other logistics for the take-off of the journal.

The imperativeness of providing an outlet for the wide dissemination of research findings in the field of open and distance learning within the West African region and beyond has been on the front burner of the National Open University of Nigeria for some time now. I am therefore happy that the Regional Training Institute for Research in Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL) has established this bi-annual, international, scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to open and distance learning to document, disseminate and advance knowledge, teaching and research in this emerging field.

The Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning (RETRIDAL), which hosts this journal is an academic and research arm of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) that has the specific responsibility and expertise to undertake and foster research in Open and Distance Learning with special attention to the West African sub-region. As a practical response to the growing demand for training and research, RETRIDAL was established in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Vancouver, BC. Canada to ensure the success of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system and maximise the benefits of distance education in the West African sub-region. RETRIDAL is focused on providing training services and opportunities to other emerging open and distance learning institutions, building a regional network of ODL trainers and researchers, undertaking practice-based research within and across the West African sub-region, and networking with other similar institutions globally. Given the fact that quality is a central issue in open and distance learning, the quality of the planning and implementation of the research and capacity development processes is a matter of priority. In response to the quality imperative therefore, RETRIDAL seeks to provide high quality capacity development and research activities with the ultimate aim of improving the overall practice of distance education and open learning in Africa and beyond.

This overview gives a wonderful insight into the quality of the journal intended to provide academics and policy makers with a forum to share experiences and knowledge. It is also intended to be a veritable avenue for sharing of information and best practices not only to the academic professional and career development but also for informed policy makers and community activities relating to the field of open and distance learning.

It is my pleasure, therefore, to inform you that the University is strongly committed to cutting-edge research in the field of open and distance learning, and will consistently, jointly with the Commonwealth of Learning, support the West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning, through the Regional Training Institute for Open and Distance Learning in achieving the mandate of documenting, disseminating and advancing knowledge, teaching and research in the field of open and distance learning.

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 can be seen 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. 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 had 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 to build a network of Open and Distance Learning trainers and a 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, Tanzania within few years ago in their bid to respond to various needs. Many more are expected to participate in the same activities in future years. The feedback from many of the institutional, as well as individual participants had been 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 from the Regional Training and Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning, RETRIDAL, present to you, with a deep sense of accomplishment and real pride, the maiden edition of the Journal, West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning, WAJOFEEL. The initial work on getting the Journal out started some few years ago. The efforts to do so faced many logistic problems but today, we feel happy that the maiden issue is right in your hands. First, we thank the Commonwealth of Learning, COL, who had encouraged and supported all efforts to get the Journal published. Next, we appreciate the support and encouragement of the National Open University of Nigeria, NOUN. The former and the current Vice-Chancellors have been supportive and zealously keen in seeing the Journal published. Our various editors who worked hard at reviewing and re-reviewing the articles sent to them need to be specially appreciated. The contributions of the originators of the idea of the Journal as well as those who also started preliminary work in ensuring its publication, and especially those of the first Acting Director of the Institute, cannot be forgotten.

Open and Distance Learning, ODL, in its present form, is new to the West African sub-region and it could be rightly said that this is the first Journal with a regional focus in ODL in the sub-region. Efforts were made to solicit articles from the sub-region, especially from the countries, which are members of the Commonwealth. This maiden issue carries articles from Ghana, the Gambia, and Nigeria. There is a contribution from Tanzania also. As an international Journal, we do hope to carry articles from all over the world, hoping that this maiden edition will help to publicise the Journal to the entire world. We anticipate having submissions from all who are interested in the development of ODL in Africa, and in the developing nations generally.

ODL is about providing education to the masses; it is about ensuring quality education. It eases the head-ache of many governments in relation to the issue of access to education, and the rising cost of education. ODL massifies higher education without compromising quality. There is thus the need for research to guide and guard actions, policy, theory and decision making. Often, research findings remain on the shelves of the researchers gathering dust and not disseminated. One of the various ways in which such researches could be available to all within the sub-region is by widely disseminating the results of research findings by individual practitioners, theoreticians, scholars, administrators, students, and various stake

holders in ODL. This Journal intends to fill the gap in this area. Twice a year, it intends to come out with the results of system-based researches, regional and country-wide surveys, empirical studies, and sound, even if simple research reports, to guide actions, practices, policy, theory and decision. The research reports will however be inter-laced from time to time with opinion and theoretical papers, which may take between 10 - 20% of the presentations. Such papers will focus on best practices, emerging techniques, description, evaluation and critiques of new technologies and applications. Again, we want to use the Journal to extend the argument that all disciplines could be studied by means of distance education and especially by open and distance learning; hence we shall not discriminate in publishing research from any field in as much as such field has relevance for ODL and could be taught by the ODL delivery mode.

This maiden edition carries TEN articles.

In the first paper, Literacy at a Distance in Multilingual Contexts, Ofulue argues that the choice of language for literacy in multilingual societies is a complex one. The paper examined the issues involved, namely: language policy, language and teacher development as well as the role that distance education and ICTs can play in making literacy accessible in as many languages as possible. Using two distance learning literacy projects as case studies, her findings suggest that although there is evidence of growing accessibility to ICTs like mobile phones and other emerging technologies, their use and success to increase access to literacy in users' languages, are yet to be maximised and attained. It is in fact doubtful if ICT policy in developing nations pays any attention to the issue of linguistic literacy using available technology.

Ahiatrogah investigated the challenges facing students in universities that are using distance education to train teachers in Ghana. His study found that among the respondents, there were differences in terms of availability and use of working hours to study, financial cost of the programme, and having access to libraries. Other challenges revealed were job security, cost of technology, inadequate technology, competent staff, developing curriculum for distance education, and the quality of study materials. The study also showed some lack of coordination and cooperation between agencies involved in training teachers through distance education and the author recommended that they should be meeting occasionally to exchange ideas in order to address the differences in the challenges facing them. We need to call attention to the state of libraries in many developing nations. In Nigeria for example, both public and institutional libraries are dying, yet students have no access to virtual libraries, and because of inadequate technology and due to challenges of internet connectivity, many students also cannot take full advantage of the web as a veritable source of learning resources. Developing nations need to pay attention to this serious issue because of its effects on the quality of education provided.

Maduekwe and Ifeanyi in their study, *Innovations and Best Practices: Language Teachers' Perception of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Nigerian ESL context*, investigated teachers' perception of the use, adequacy, and availability of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in English language classrooms. They found that English Language teachers appreciate the potentials of technologies but lack the confidence and initiative to use them. The perception of teachers differs more on awareness of existence than on its use in the Language classroom. Furthermore, the perception of technologies by male teachers varied greatly from those of the females. Authors enjoined teachers to prepare earnestly for embracing the challenges of ICT facilities in language pedagogy through continuous training and retraining.

Investigating the Entrepreneurial Training Implications in the Organization of Flexible Learning, Nwankwo, Onyali and Nweke found that employment capacity in Nigeria did not significantly increase proportionately with literacy. Thus, employment capacity in Nigeria has almost reached its saturation-point, while literacy rate is just about reaching the average-point. The result having a negative outcome indicated a disproportionate relationship between employment capacity and literacy in Nigeria. They recommended that flexible learning as a literacy programme cum policy should be modeled towards entrepreneurial training of the earners, arguing that the essence of this is to expand the employment competency of individuals, and the employment elasticity cum opportunities of the Nigerian society.

Keita's paper entitled "Meeting Gambia's Human Resource Needs for Sustainable Development through Distance Education: Realities and Challenges" concluded that with just one university in the country, there is the need for an alternative method of education which is different from the conventional method that can reach more people in both the urban and rural areas, or reach different people, workers and those at home, at a relatively lower cost. He argued that Distance Education offers a genuine possibility for the Gambia since currently, distance education is mainly used in the training of teachers. It is yet to be adopted in training of other disciplines that will provide the human resources that would help the country achieve its developmental needs. The Gambia has a vibrant printing service which could provide the support/services needed in the production of educational materials which could be distributed to learners in their different regions using the existing network of Regional Education Offices located in the various administrative divisions in the country. He argued further that the advances in Information and Communication Technology avail the learners the opportunity to use a variety of tools during their learning process. These include the use of radio, TV, internet and mobile phones. The Gambia has a nation wide coverage of each of these technologies.

James' study investigated the potency of combining concept mapping with reflective writing strategies on attitudinal change of Pre-Service Nigeria Certificate in Education, N.C.E., teachers in Biology. He found a significant difference in attitudinal change between the two groups used and went on to spell out the implications of this finding especially for the preparation of study materials in ODL. The findings also have implications for instructional facilitation.

Stress is a major physical and psychological killer. It affects people of all ages and in all professions. Agbu and Ojo, in their paper "Technostress in the Age of Information Communication Technology among the Workforce in Nigeria: A Comparative Study" compares the extent of technostress among workers in two different occupations - banking and teaching- in Nigeria. They found that teachers seemed to be more technologically stressed than bankers and that older workers seemed to experience more technostress than younger ones. In their words:

The results show that (i) academic staff manifested significantly higher levels of technostress than the employees from the banking sector, (ii) there were no gender differences in the manifestations of technostress either amongst bankers or academic staff, (iii) older participants manifested higher levels of technostress than younger participants, (iv) a positive correlation was observed between computer hassles and stress reaction. To this end, improved ICT training and stress management interventions were highlighted as management techniques for technostress in the two human industries.

Environmental pollution is a serious concern to governments and individuals alike. Integrating environmental pollution as a discipline into academic studies is a rapidly growing practice. Of recent, the government of the Delta State in South-South Nigeria invited the National Open University of Nigeria to design customised programmes at the postgraduate level for the study of environmental pollution and the serious effects of climate change on the area. Besides, cases of river and lake pollution had become rather frequent in parts of the country particularly the riverine areas. The paper by Medupin, though a research carried out in Britain, comes in useful platform because the methodology adopted could form one of the planks the university could use in effectively mounting courses in the area of environmental studies using the ODL approach.

The exploratory study on M-Learning by Maritim and Mushi was designed for two purposes. The first purpose was to identify the extent to which the Open University of Tanzania used mobile phone to communicate with the distance learners on administrative and academic matters. The second purpose was to identify the distance learners' capacity to afford mobile phones, their level of mobile phone usage and the learners' envisaged opportunities and challenges in mobile phones use for enhancing learning. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in data collection and analysis.

They found that (a) the Open University of Tanzania rarely used mobile phone to contact students; (b) while mobile phones are affordable and hence accessible to the majority of learners, the type and capacity of the mobile phones owned cannot accommodate extensive pedagogical use; (c) running costs for large scale use of mobile technology may prove unsustainable for the majority of learners whose disposable income is low and this constitutes a hurdle for large scale pedagogical use; and (d) the student-student and student-tutor mobile communication for academic and administrative issues is relatively low.

In the last paper, Ogwashi looked at the issue of property transfer in the Nigerian context but used a number of foreign cases to illustrate the arguments. The paper posited that there is need for major shifts and review in the Nigerian legal system on property transfer, especially since they have become obsolete. The study calls attention to the need for taking a critical look at the transfer of goods forming part of a bulk.

RETRIDAL sees quality as a habit and not just a mere act. We thus continuously bring quality to bear in our capacity development training programmes and we intend to bring this habit to bear on this Journal. One thing we had found out so quickly, but so painfully, is that the quality of research had dimmed. This we see as a sad reflection on the quality of current doctoral training in research in our universities. And, this cuts across disciplines. We were alarmed at the high percentage of papers rejected in the course of the journal. This finding had further strengthened our resolve to intensify our capacity building efforts in the areas of research methodology in ODL. One major area of deficiency here is the choice and application of correct and appropriate analytical tool. Many researchers had rather good research design but chose the wrong statistical method in analyzing their data. This is more noticeable in the various survey studies reported. In some studies using the Analysis of Variance as the analytical tool, we had found a lack of congruence between sample size, number of dependent variables, and degrees of freedom of the F-ratio. Such lack of congruence will produce wrong F-values or F-critical and thus wrong conclusions. We thank our eagle-eyed Consulting editors for spotting cases like these and calling our attention to them.

It is the hope of the editorial team that this Journal will meet the expectations of contributors, who had been looking for a source to disseminate their research findings in a way understood by all, researchers, professionals and practitioners.

Finally, we want to express our profound gratitude to all our consulting editors, most especially those who worked on the articles in this maiden edition. We appreciate you all.

Babatunde Ipaye
Managing Editor

