

Delivery of Distance Learning in Higher Education in Kenyatta University, Kenya and the University of Padua, Italy

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Abstract

The ever increasing demand for university education, overstretched residential facilities and the need for continued learning have led to the emergence of Distance Learning (DL) in Kenya as is the case in other parts of the world. This paper reports results of a comparative study on DL delivery in Kenya and Italy. **This was a case study of the University of Padua in Veneto Region, Italy and Kenyatta University in Kenya.** The focus of the study was on DL delivery models, funding, the costs of DL programmes, staffing, and the policies governing these programmes in Kenya and Italy. **The study established that there are similarities between the two institutions, Kenyatta University and the University of Padua in terms of DL modes of delivery, and funding of the programmes while differences arise in the courses offered through DL, technology employed, and the policies governing DL in the two institutions.**

Keywords: Distance learning, delivery methods, programmes, policies, technology

Introduction

Distance Learning, DL, provides study opportunities for those who cannot or do not want to take part in classroom teaching at a particular institution on a full-time basis (Holmberg, 1995). In its earliest form, DL meant study by correspondence. As new technologies' developed, distance instruction was delivered through such media as audiotape, videotape, radio and television broadcasting and satellite transmission. Micro-computers, the internet and the worldwide web are shaping the current generation of DL, and virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and knowledge systems may systems may be next.

According to Kerka (1996), some define DL as the use of print or electronic communications media to deliver instruction when teachers and learners are separated in place and/or time. However, others emphasise DL over education, defining it as getting people - and often video images of people - into the same electronic space so they can help one another learn (Filipczak, 1995) or a system and process that connect learners with distributed resources (Filipczak, *Ibid*). These two definitions imply learner - centeredness and control. Typical audiences for earlier generations of DL were adults often seeking advanced education and training at home, on-the- job, or in the military. Their multiple responsibilities or physical circumstances prevented attendance at a traditional institution (Bates, 2000). Now anyone is potentially a distance learner, a concept that has implications for the organisation of educational institutions, and for teaching and learning.

While for some, DL is identical to private study of prescribed texts with or without special study guides, for others, it is a teaching/learning system including specially prepared study materials and regular, mediated contacts between students and tutors, individually or in groups. There are distance teaching universities that offer their students printed and recorded course materials with mediated communication, sometimes providing supplementary face-to-face teaching. This applies, for example, to the Dutch Open University and the Colombian Open University. Others, like the British Open University, provide not only for course materials, but also for correspondence, telephone and computer communication between students and tutors (Holmberg, 1995). This use of pre-produced course materials and non-contiguous communication, sometimes supplemented by face-to-face contacts, represents the practice of most distance- teaching institutions in the world. A term that is often used to describe the mode of delivery provided by DL institutions is flexible learning, which, according to Moore (2000) is not a specific methodology. It is an approach to teaching and learning that is open to the possible use of a variety of innovative learning practices and combinations of practices. Ideally, it provides the learner with a choice of learning strategies, as well as the choice of place, pace and time. In this sense, it is an extension of the concept of open learning. Whatever the nature and mode of delivery, DL has several challenges for learners and providers, particularly with regard to practice pertaining to quality education and training, and policy.

With the advent of the new communication revolution, the world is witnessing an expansion in DL. The new information revolution has enabled academic institutions to provide a flexible and more open learning environment for students. The convergence of new information technologies such as telecommunications, computers, satellites, and fibre optic technologies is making it easier for institutions to implement DL (Harasim, 1993) and according to Rahm and Reed (1998), indications are that DL in higher education would continue to grow.

Distance Learning in Africa

Prior to the emergence of DL providers in Africa, many African students obtained various qualifications through DL providers in Europe and North America. One of the oldest DL universities that emerged on the African continent is the University of South Africa (UNISA), which has been offering correspondence courses since 1946. UNISA's success has, as a result, spurred the establishment of other DL providers on the African continent. Examples of these are the open universities in Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, which started out as providers of residential programmes and have now diversified into providing DL as well (Juma, 2003).

DL techniques are increasingly being employed by a growing number of higher education institutions in Africa. While most of the on-going DL initiatives on the continent have been used to upgrade the quality of basic education (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 1999), some countries are taking bold initiatives in piloting Internet-based and satellite-linked DL programmes in selected courses. The University of Abidjan and the African Virtual University are good examples.

While a number of African universities have established DL departments, the delivery platform to date has been text and correspondence-based, supported by print material. Some of the institutions are beginning to explore the use of the Internet, video conferencing, and other forms of multimedia (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 1999). For example, the Telesun programme in Cameroon uses Internet-based courses in its science programme. The OHDET programme links Benin and three other countries

with McGill University in Canada. The RIDL programme in Djibouti provides teacher training from French universities (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 1999). Currently, four institutions in South Africa provide DL courses: Technikon South Africa, Technical College of South Africa, Vista University, and the University of South Africa (UNISA), the oldest mega- university. Its DL programme to off-campus students was started in 1946.

The most ambitious DL initiative on the continent to date is the African Virtual University (AVU) Project. This is the first satellite-based attempt to harness the power of information technologies to deliver university education in the disciplines of science and engineering, non- credit/continuing education programmes, and remedial instruction to students in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Darkwa and Mazibuko (2000), it represents the essential instruments for sharing resources at affordable prices to large numbers of people. The AVU project would deliver instructional programmes, strengthen the capacity in African partner institutions, implement a network infrastructure, and implement a digital library programme (Darkwa and Mazibuko, *ibid*).

Distance Learning in Kenya

The first government policy to address distance higher education was the Act of Parliament of 1966, which established the Board of Adult Education. The Kamunge Report of 1988, expressed satisfaction that the External Degree Programme offered by the University of Nairobi as an example of a successful Alternative and Continuing Education Programme that could be nationally accessed by eligible learners throughout the country. It also recommended that facilities for printing and recording of educational materials at the College of Adult and DL be updated and expanded to cope with the growing demand for adult education through distance teaching (Republic of Kenya, 1988). The initiation of the Faculty of DL in the 1960s was majorly due to the fact that the need for high level manpower was greatest felt due to responsibilities created soon after independence. The first recommendation for the establishment of the first degree by external studies, University of Nairobi was made in the Kenyan Education Commission Report (Republic of Kenya, 1985).

With the continued demand for university education, the increasing number of candidates who meet the requirements and the inability of the internal departments, the government through the University of Nairobi sought to look into, the possibility of setting up external degree studies programme. This was followed by appointment of a task force committee on 21st June, 1983 by the University of Nairobi Deans Committee. The task force submitted a report in August the same year which provided details on the structure, courses to be offered, medium of instruction and support services, and financial requirements and the administration of the programme. The objectives of the external degree programme were to provide: learning opportunities for the qualified Kenyans who cannot secure places in the existing internal faculties of the national universities; an alternative and innovative method of learning which is not limited to a particular time and space. An opportunity for people to learn at their own pace; the much needed high level manpower; and an opportunity to maximise the use of limited educational resources both human and material by making university education available beyond lecture halls in Kenya.

The Mungai Report of 1995 on its part recommended that the establishment of an open university similar to the ones operating in Britain, Hong Kong and Tanzania be considered as a way of extending university education to as many Kenyans as possible. The report, however, cautioned against basing the Open University on the current restrictive system practised in the public universities. It was of the view that it should be based on innovative strategies aimed at meeting the needs of as many Kenyans as possible that desire university education. The public universities were asked to establish short courses for purposes of skills improvement and a source of generating income (Juma, 2003).

The Koech Report of the year 1999 lauded the external degree programme of the University of Nairobi as being particularly beneficial to serving teachers and other Kenyans in employment that would otherwise not have been able to enroll for university education on a full time basis. It recommended that the programmes be expanded in order to reach many deserving and qualified Kenyans. It also lauded parallel degree programmes that have helped individuals who had otherwise been barred from public university admission (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

Despite these recommendations by the important policy documents, DL programmes remain tiny components of higher education and government involvement is quite minimal. Among the various DL degree programmes currently being implemented by most of the Kenyan public universities, **the External Bachelor of Education Degree Programme offered by the University of Nairobi** was designed and implemented to meet the needs of DL (Juma, 2003). The course, which is under the auspices of the College of Adult and DL, Faculty of External Degree Studies, was launched in the mid- 1980s with financial support from the British Council. As expected, the development, production and dissemination of DL materials require adequate resources if the full potential of the various media used is to be realized (Juma, 2003). The preparation of good quality, self-instructional materials for distance learners can be difficult and at times, time -consuming, if they have to be pedagogically sound. The course programmes and students materials for this particular programme, however, seem to have been so successful that the College of Adult and DL has had to reprint them for use in a number of DL programmes in the Eastern and Southern African region.

According to Juma (2003), the Bachelor of Education distance degree programme was designed to last 6 years and was open to the then 'A' level candidates with particular preference for teachers and teacher trainers who held a teaching diploma and the teaching certificate holders. This has expanded not only to other programmes at the University of Nairobi but to other universities in the country, both private and public.

In addition, Kenya had two African Virtual University sites located in Kenyatta and Egerton Universities. The African Virtual University (AVU) started in 1997 with the pilot phase. During the pilot phase AVU sites received courses transmitted via satellites such as introduction to programming, introduction to engineering, computer organisation and architecture, introduction to Internet, among others transmitted via satellite from universities in Canada, Europe and the United States of America (Juma, 2001). This was set up to increase access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa by reaching a large number of students and professionals in multiple sites simultaneously; improve the quality of education by tapping the best African and global academic resources, and by offering training and coaching to academics in African universities to prepare teaching materials

for delivery through the AVU network ; and contribute to bridging the digital divide by improving connectivity in AVU learning centres and host universities and by providing training in engineering, computer science, information technology and business (Juma, 2001). Their objective has, however, changed from providing training directly to students through their sites to providing the much needed training of staff in open and DL.

Distance Learning in Italy

DL through online courses in Italy is a fairly new addition to the country's higher education system according to the School Directory (2012). Despite the late start, the format is proving to be very popular and extremely effective. While many states in the U.S. first embarked upon online learning back in the early to mid-1990s, it was not until 2001 that this mode of education delivery was approved and made official in Italy.

On July 13, 2001, the Council of Ministers of Education of the European Union agreed on and put into action a resolution and formal plan that essentially encouraged Italy (and other EU member states) to develop a comprehensive system of DL, with courses delivered primarily online that would lead to first, second and third level degrees in a variety of major and minor academic fields (the School Directory, 2012). The goal of these new online universities, called "Universitas Telematica," in Italian, is to remove the obstacles of distance and the restrictive format of a traditional university education in order to attract new learners who would otherwise be unable to participate. This aimed at broadening the students' horizons, developing new knowledge and removing educational barriers so as to provide greater access to academic, vocational and technology programmes.

Challenges to Effective Implementation of Distance Learning

The current higher education infrastructure cannot accommodate the growing college-aged population and enrollments, making more DL programmes necessary. Callahan (2003) notes that the largest high school class in U.S. history would occur in 2009. In corroboration of this projection, a survey conducted by the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics predicted that college enrollment would grow 16% over

the next ten years (Jones, 2003). Reeve and Perlich, in projecting similar growth rates for the state of Utah, added that because college and university attendance are not restricted to the 'traditional' age group, this presents only a partial measurement of the projected demand for higher education (Reeve & Perlich, 2002). With this growth in college-age population and enrollments and the need for more lifelong learning for adults, many institutions acknowledge that within the decade there would be more students than their facilities could accommodate (Oblinger, Barone, and Hawkins, 2001). Scalable distance-education models may provide a solution to capacity constraints growing enrollments place on the current higher education infrastructure.

Staffing of Distance Learning Programmes

Despite growing support among teaching staff members for DL, there are acknowledged drawbacks. Design teams and instructors must anticipate isolation that can be felt by instructors who are separated from their students and this isolation, according to Carr (2000) may affect instructor satisfaction, motivation, and potential long-term involvement in DL. They anticipated the potential for feeling isolated and suggested that "feelings of isolation may be offset by the instructor's ability to work with peers in other institutions or with students across the globe.

An NEA survey reported that teaching staff members' top concern about DL was that they would do more work for the same amount of pay, apparently a merited concern. The NEA (2000) found that most teaching staff members do spend more time on their distance courses than they do on traditional courses, and 84% of them do not get a reduced workload. Similarly, 63% of distance teaching staff members receive no extra compensation for their distance courses.

A UCEA survey of four-year institutions found that 64% of teaching staff members were compensated for distance courses with normal, on-campus salary; 74% were additionally given development stipends. However, 82% of respondents added a qualifier about how compensation for DL depended on the type of course, the rank of the teaching staff member, and other factors (Hickman, 2003).

Technology' and Distance Learning

One of the most apparent trends affecting DL is the advancement of technology. Infrastructures are growing stronger as computers double in speed while decreasing in cost, and high-speed network connections continue to expand. Computer, fax, picture phone, duplication, and other modalities are merging and becoming available at cheaper prices (Cetron and Daview, 2003). Further, IT functionalities not imagined ten years ago are being realised. By 2018, computers would be able to routinely translate languages in real-time with the accuracy and speed necessary for effective communications (Cetron and Daview, 2003). New technology would transform higher education as we know it today (Oblinger *et al.*, 2001), one example being the changes caused by broader use of e-texts and PDAs (Chick *et al.*, 2002). By the year 2012, schools and colleges in the US would routinely use computerised teaching programmes and interactive television lectures and seminars, as well as traditional methods. Videoconferencing and other technologies would also help enrich distance media and provide many benefits of face-to-face instruction.

With advances in technology, much of open DL is driven by technology. Courses are designed with technology in mind and ICT is increasingly being used to assist in learning (Barney, 2008). This technology enables the student to have direct and immediate access to the lecturer, may participate in chat rooms with other learners and the lecturer, to transmit materials by electronic mail, may access the digital library and browse the internet doing their own research or may have lectures posted on the web. There is also a growing trend whereby some courses are available only via electronic means. Telematic centres and multi-medium learning models established in many institutions offering DL either in dedicated DL institutions or in dual mode institutions which are principally contact learning institutions but operate limited DL programmes.

Technology may continue to increase the options available for distributing DL to more people in a scalable fashion, especially if it is accompanied by technological fluency. The increase in internet usage includes competence as well as sheer number (Cetron and Daview, 2003). The networked world is dominating the economy, increasing the power of the individual, and

changing business models that no one can afford to be without computer competence. Accordingly, universities are beginning to list the fluent use of technology as an outcome skill, encourage students to take online courses, and even requiring students to take at least one online course before they graduate (Young, 2003).

Challenges of Implementing DL in Africa

For the developing world and in particular Africa, DL is a promising and practical strategy to address the challenge of widening access thus increasing participation in higher education. It is increasingly being seen as an educational delivery model which is cost-effective without sacrificing quality. On the African continent where resources are scarce and higher education provision is poor, DL is viewed as a viable, cost effective means of expanding provision without costly outlay in infrastructure (Pityana, 2009). Holding the promise of economies of scale and expanded geographical reach, it is not surprising that many African governments are starting to explore this potential.

While DL holds promises, a number of obstacles would have to be addressed before it can be fully utilised in Africa. There are a number of technological constraints that hinder DL. One of the challenges is the lack of a trained cadre of professionals to support the implementation of DL. The effective use of DL technologies demands that teaching staff be properly trained in using DL as a delivery mode. To date, few African scholars are familiar with teaching in an online environment. This situation poses a major challenge in introducing DE on the continent.

The absence of clearly defined national DL policies in most African countries poses another challenge. Policies are needed to provide a framework for the development of DL. With the exception of South Africa, few African countries have a clearly defined national information or communication policy to guide the development of DL in their respective countries. The absence of such a policy is a clear obstacle to the development of DL. Access to connectivity remains one of the major challenges in Africa. Closely related to these connectivity issues are financial matters. ISP services are expensive in Africa. The connecting colleges charge tuition, in some cases by law, very high tuition to students taking courses.

Study Justification

Distance learning is recognised as of importance due to its flexibility not only in admission but also the pace and place of study. It is particularly important in Kenya because it allows increased access which remains a challenge to Kenya as it is to most developing countries. The DL programmes delivery has, however, been faced with challenges that hinder its effective implementation in Kenya. It is against this backdrop that this study was conducted, aimed at comparing the DL delivery in Kenyatta University with that of the University of Padua. The study sought to comparatively analyse DL delivery in Kenyatta University, an institution in a developing country and the University Padua, an institution in a developed country with the aim of identifying the best practices. The focus of the study was a comparison of DL delivery models, funding, the costs of DL programmes, staffing, and the policies governing these programmes in both countries.

Methodology

This was a case study of the University of Padua in Veneto Region, Italy and Kenyatta University in Kenya. In both universities, data was collected through interviews with university leaders and director of DL as well as questionnaires with both close and open-ended questions for Heads of Department and Deans of Faculty and document analysis. The responses to the questionnaires were used to validate, in part, information retrieved from documents and *vice versa*.

The instruments were validated through the use of twenty students' questionnaires and ten staff questionnaires for pre-testing purposes. The open-ended questions were scored by giving a mark for a relevant response and a zero for irrelevant and blank responses. The questions selected were divided into two equal halves for both the students and the teaching staff taking the odd against the even- numbered items. The scores of the halves were then correlated using the split- half measure of reliability. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was calculated between the scores obtained for each person on the odd items and the scores obtained on the even items. The students' questionnaire yielded a half test coefficient of 0.79 while the staff questionnaire yielded a half test coefficient of 0.81. The subjects'

scores were then corrected using the Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula for the full test. A total test coefficient of 0,88 and 0.89 was obtained for students and staff respectively.

Results and Discussion

This section is a comparison of the various factors as they were found in the two universities compared. Some of the challenges earlier discussed are here put into sharper focus in relation to the two countries, Kenya and Italy.

Distance Learning Mode of Delivery

Kenyatta University and the University of Padua do offer DL programmes in dual mode that is, running both regular residential programmes and the DL programmes. The universities have developed DL programmes to supplement the residential mode which they were initially set up to provide. In the year 1966, an Act of Parliament was passed in Kenya that saw the establishment of the Board of Adult Education. This Act was prompted by urgent demand for adult education and especially for teacher training following the country's independence in the year 1963. Founded in the year 1222 as a school of Law, DL programmes through online courses at the University of Padua like other institutions in Italy is a fairly new addition to the country's higher education system according to the School Directory (2012), and it was not until the year 2001 that this mode of education delivery was approved and made official in Italy. The University of Padua too started by offering degree courses to teachers aimed at upgrading their qualifications. The programmes have, however, evolved over time, and just like the evolution of DL in many parts of the world, Kenyatta University and the University of Padua are offering these programmes not only as DL programmes for teacher training, but to other programmes as well and to both the adults and the working class in majority of the faculties.

It is important to integrate DL fully within the existing formal education system in a dual mode of delivery that is adopted by the two universities participating in the study. Where this is not accomplished, however, according to Willis (1994), the danger is that DL would remain at the periphery of the educational system, under-valued and under-used. Full

integration helps to reduce inevitable resistance to innovation within existing tertiary institutions and does much to overcome the perception that DL is somehow an inferior product when compared with residential instruction. Dual-mode approaches that make use of existing academic staff and facilities like the case of Kenyatta University and the University of Padua reduce the competition for scarce resources often associated with the establishment of a new institution. Likewise, common admissions policies for residential and DL students, together with the award of a single institutional degree based on common standards, does much to offset the notion that DL is of inferior status.

Delivery of the DL programmes in the two institutions includes face-to-face teaching, audiocassettes; library services other teaching/learning materials, which include identified key textbooks in each unit and the use of modules. Face-to-face teaching and learning included residential sessions for orientation, tutoring and counselling. Kenyatta University has established study centres also used as student support centres across the country. The centres provide facilities for learning and for individual and group tutoring and academic guidance and counselling. They also serve the basic function for information provision and distribution of study materials. The University of Padua on the other hand utilises the e-learning platform and the programmes are run centrally from the university. It is clear that Kenyatta University, though utilising electronic media in the form of audiocassettes, it has not fully engaged the use of information and communications technology to match the University of Padua and other major players in the field of DL. This factor has been attributed to the fact that the country is not technologically up-to-date and thus the residents especially those living in rural areas have no access to electricity and internet services that can support the programmes.

The examination mode in the two institutions include continuous assessment tests in the form of written assignments, semester tests, demonstration projects and written examination for the end of each semester. The media used in DL in Kenyatta University could be classified as print (paper)- based DL. Even though there are other support components built into the course, print materials are the primary delivery strategy. The print materials are in the form of study lecture units or modules, course notes, and practical guides.

The University of Padua also uses print materials in the form of modules and electronic media. The primary delivery strategy in this university, however, is the e-learning platform. Numerous studies from around the world have indicated that medium of instruction does not make any important difference in student achievement, attitudes or retention (Clark, 1983). In fact, how the media are used has proven to be more important than which medium is selected. Furthermore, multiple media appear to be more effective than a single medium, with interactivity between students and tutors contributing a major boost to learning. Since the choice of technology does not influence learning, then the factors of technology cost and maintenance become determining considerations. On this basis, print media are likely to remain the best choice for the university and the country since they are inexpensive, reliable and are readily used by students without requiring them to have access to specific equipment or services that are currently scarce and not easily accessible by most Kenyans.

Criteria for Admission into Distance Learning programmes

The DL programmes in both institutions take into account the need for continued learning with other work and social responsibilities. In Kenya, those who drop out of the system due to various reasons are allowed access to DL programmes by relaxing the admission criteria from the immediate O level cohort. Admission to these programmes now includes those who did not attain the pass mark to join university through residential mode but have gained some experience through employment. This is also the case in Italy where the DL programmes are used to upgrade the skills by offering degrees to those who did not qualify to join university through regular programmes but have since gained experience.

Funding of Distance Learning Programmes

The Ministry of Education in Kenya spends more than twelve per cent of its annual budget on university education. Consequently, according to the director of DL programmes who participated in the study, the larger portion of allocation to public universities is used to cater for salaries of university staff and very little is left for teaching/learning materials and equipment. The Kenyan government neither has a department dealing with DL within the

Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology nor a DL policy for his/her education in place which makes it difficult to make specific provision **for DL** in the overall national budget. As a result, the Institute of DL in the university has had to generate funds for running the programmes, general planning, coordination, supervision and evaluation of the students. In most cases, money generated from DL programmes has been used to subsidise other residential programmes according to the director who participated in the study. The scenario is not different at the University of Padua which raises funds for the programmes from the fees collected from students. The funds raised are used for running the programmes, general planning, coordination, supervision and evaluation of the students.

Cost of Distance Learning Programmes

The study found that the students registered in DL in Kenyatta University paid slightly lower (Kshs. 100,000 for the arts and Kshs. 110,000 for the science courses) than their counterparts in the residential mode. Most of the students (59%) who responded in the study still felt that the programmes were not cost-effective. They felt that the amount and quality of services they received in these programmes did not correspond with the amount of fees they were charged. In contrast, the University of Padua charges 20% more fees for the DL programmes than the residential programmes. This is because the students registered in DL programmes have to raise funds to run the programmes. It is also due to the fact that technology, which is used to run the programmes through e-learning, is costly and this is borne by the learners.

At Kenyatta University, DL programmes could be considered cost-effective given that the amount of fees they are charged per course per annum is lower than that payable by residential mode students. This is considering that the fees charged is inclusive of accommodation fees for the period they are hosted by the institutions for orientation, introductory tutorials and end of semester examinations. Furthermore, the students registered in the programmes benefit because they do not have to leave work to attend to residential mode of education. Thus, no forgone income, they also do not incur the costs of regular transportation and accommodation charges, and like their counterparts in the residential programme, they enjoy a subsidy in the meals they take while hosted in the institution for face-to-face interaction.

Sponsorship of the students pursuing DL programmes in Kenya has, however, not been given priority. Their counterparts in the residential mode benefit from student bursaries and student loans currently disbursed by the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) but the students in DL programmes are not given an equal opportunity and only started benefiting from 2008/2009 academic year. Whereas the regular students acquire loans regardless of their employment status and only start paying after completion of their degrees at the an interest rate of 4% per annum, the DL programmes students only benefit from the loans if they have salaried employment and start paying soon after disbursement of the loans and at the market interest rate. This in essence means that the needy who are enrolled in DL programmes and who have no salaried employment cannot access the loans extended to their counterparts in regular degree programmes. In Italy, these are purely self-sponsored students and they do not have students' loans scheme as is the case in Kenya.

Staffing of Distance Learning Programmes

The University of Padua provides DL programmes majorly through e-learning. Currently, the laws governing the provision of DL in Italy require that the universities provide courses at a distance that are different from the regular university courses which like the regular programmes require at least nine(9) professors to be approved. The courses started as teacher training courses for the primary and secondary schools but have expanded to several courses for teachers and other national projects. The courses include training for deans and heads of departments as well as training for special needs education among others. In Kenya on the other hand, the courses offered through DL are the same courses that are offered in the residential programmes and there is no restriction in that regard. DL in Kenya was first started through the Board of Adult Education Act in the year 1965. This was started majorly to provide training to a number of untrained teachers at the beginning of the country's independency. This provided certificate courses to the untrained teachers as the necessary qualifications required of them but like the University of Padua, these programmes have also expanded to include courses in other faculties and in other universities as well.

The study established that the DL programmes offered by the two institutions

relied heavily on staff who facilitate the residential mode programmes. This is, however, expected in institutions running the programmes in dual mode. They are assisted by staff hired on part-time basis to facilitate the DL programmes but no staff, especially teaching, is employed on full-time basis to particularly facilitate DL programmes in both institutions. Dual-mode approach that makes use of existing academic staff and facilities like the case of Kenyatta University and the University of Padua has been recommended by some studies (Saint, 1999) as it reduces the competition for scarce resources often associated with the establishment of a new institution, and erode staff resistance by offering opportunities for direct participation.

There is a feeling in both universities (the University of Padua and Kenyatta University) that the number of staff facilitating these programmes is not adequate and that additional staff are required in order to run the programmes effectively. According to the study findings, ninety per cent of the teaching staff respondents from Kenyatta University felt that the level of staffing was inadequate. This, they said contributed to overloading, and hence lack of adequate attention to the students in the DL, a factor that has a bearing on quality of services offered to the students. The lecturers said that they are heavily burdened with many duties because majority of them are from internal faculties and are engaged in teaching the residential programmes.

Distance Learning Policies

The first government policy to address DL in Kenya was the Act of Parliament of 1966, which established the Board of Adult Education. Since independence, however, a number of commissions and reports have highlighted DL as an alternative mode of providing education. For example, the Ominde Commission of 1964/65 recommended the establishment of an advisory commission on DL; the Gachathi Report of 1976 emphasised the need for solving educational problems on large scale by diversifying education to include DL; the Mackay Report of 1981, the Kamunge Report of 1988 and the Koech Report of 2000 included the use of DL in their recommendations. The latest government initiative as contained in Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 recommended the establishment of an open university and use of DL in human resource development at all levels.

The practice of DL in the country to date has been at all levels of education and provided by different institutions governed by their own institutional policies. The absence of clearly defined national DL policies in Kenya and most African countries in general poses a great challenge. Policies are needed to provide a framework for the development of DL. With the exception of South Africa, Nigeria and Tanzania, few African countries have clearly defined national policies to guide the development of DL in their respective countries. The absence of such a policy is a clear obstacle to the development of DL programmes.

Conclusion

In Italy on the other hand, there is a national policy which governs DL. The current policy has stipulated that the provision of DL in Italy requires that the universities provide courses at a distance that are different from the regular university courses, which like the regular programmes, require at least nine(9) professors to be approved. Though the University of Padua offers DL in dual mode like Kenyatta University, the programmes taught at a distance in the University of Padua have to be different from those offered in residential programmes. This is not the case with Kenyatta University where the courses taught at a distance are the same ones taught in residential programmes.

Distance Learning Programme Resources

Production of high quality DL materials for the university programmes has not been fully achieved at Kenyatta University. Staff members are thus forced to use curriculum and study materials meant for residential mode of education, which cannot effectively communicate to the learners separated from their tutors. Computing resources, both hardware and software which are very crucial in DL are expensive to afford in reasonable quantities and quality. Technology being very dynamic, universities in Kenya cannot effectively cope with these changes in terms of cost and relevancy; yet effective application of information technology is important in ensuring quality DL. The University of Padua has, however, achieved the application of technology in the provision of DL. The university successfully provides the programmes through e- learning.

Conclusion

Both institutions. Kenyatta University and the University of Padua offer DL is dual mode combining them with the traditional residential programmes. These institutions like many others offering DL in dual mode utilise the external faculty staff and have not employed teaching staff to specifically facilitate DL programmes. The difference arises when it comes to courses offered through DL in the two institutions. Kenyatta University offers the same residential courses through DE while the University of Padua offers courses through DE that are different from the residential courses. While the University of Padua has achieved the use of technology on delivery of DL, Kenyatta University like most universities in Kenya cannot cope with these c ranges in terms of cost and relevancy.

There is no specific budgetary allocation to DL programmes according to the study findings and most of the DL programmes at Kenyatta University have been launched as means of generating income to public universities hit by declining budgetary allocations. The case is similar with that of the University of Padua where the programmes are run by the fees collected from students and with no public funding for the programmes. The study also established that there are no national policies that govern DL in Kenya and that the institutions providing these programmes were guided by their own policies. The provision of DL in the University of Padua on the other hand is governed by national policies that guide these programmes throughout the country.

Implications of the Findings of this Study

The major implication of the study is that there is a great potential for the implementation of DL programmes in Kenya which if fully exploited could provide the much needed access to quality education in Kenya. This could be achieved through, among other things, adequate budgetary and resource provision, proper infrastructure development, training of adequate staff in DL and articulation of national policies guiding its implementation.

In particular, the study recommends the establishment and implementation of national policies in DL to address among other things, programmes

financing, human resource development, and quality assurance. This study also recommends mobilisation of all the stakeholders by the government to establish infrastructure that would support the application of technology in the provision of DL and that DL programmes be considered in the country's budgetary allocations to support especially the programmes' capital development.

Recommendation for Further Research

A study on DL unit costs is also recommended to establish the adequate level of funding required for the programmes.

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