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ODL Adoption in Cameroon Higher Education and Determinants from Dual-Theory Investigation

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Abstract

Cameroon's constantly growing youth population, coupled with rising secondary school graduation rates and the ever-changing labour market demands, has significantly increased the need for higher education. Conventional university infrastructures are unable to accommodate this surge, resulting in overcrowded lecture halls, poor learning outcomes, and low graduation rates. Amid these, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) emerges as a viable solution. ODL offers a flexible, cost-effective, and scalable education delivery through digital platforms. Supported by the 2023 law on higher education and the strategic partnerships with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Cameroon is making strides towards institutionalising ODL. This study investigates how higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cameroon can explore the potential of ODL to meet the increasing demands. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Institutional Theory of Organisational Readiness as a theoretical framework, the study surveys 322 faculty members from 38 HEIs. The outcomes reveal that while most participants acknowledge the usefulness of ODL in improving teaching flexibility and accessibility, there are significant barriers related to perceived ease of use, infrastructure, digital literacy, and leadership commitment. Based on these, this researcher highlights that for ODL adoption to succeed, institutions must address internal capacity gaps, promote leadership engagement, and align institutional culture with digital innovation. Recommendations include ongoing digital skills training, infrastructure upgrades, development of user-friendly platforms, and committed leadership for resource allocation. The integration of TAM and Institutional Readiness Theory provides a comprehensive framework to understand and guide ODL adoption efforts, positioning Cameroon's HEIs to better respond to national and global education challenges.

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Keywords: ODL Adoption; Higher Education Access; Technology Acceptance Model; Institutional Readiness; Distance learning

Introduction

In the last ten years, there has been an upsurge in higher education due to population growth, an increase in the number of learners graduating from secondary schools, and the ever-changing skills demanded in the labour market. In 2023, the World Bank reported that Cameroon's population had grown to 27.2 million, and within this, over 60% were young people under the age of 25 years. While the population is on the rise, data from the Ministry of Higher Education (MINESUP) indicated that secondary school graduation rates also witnessed an increase from 44% in 2000 to 65% in 2020, leading to an increasing demand for higher education (MINESUP, 2021). Despite these, Cameroon's traditional universities lack the capacity to accommodate them. In 2022, there were over 320,000 learners enrolled in state universities, which was more than their intended capacity of 150,000 learners (MINESUP, 2022). With the enrolment exceeding the seating capacity, it became obvious that lecture halls were overcrowded, and consequently, there were poor learning outcomes and low graduation rates. Despite these, higher education enrolment rates in Cameroon within the same period stood at 17%, very far below Africa's average of 32% (UNESCO, 2022).

Conscious of this, the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan for 2023-2030 urges the MINESUP to increase learner enrolment in higher education institutions from 1529 in 2021 to at least 1,700 per 100,000 inhabitants; increase the provision of higher education by private institutions from 20% to 25%; and increase the provision of vocational and technical training from 18% to 35% (MINEPAT, 2023). These recommendations aim to ensure equitable access for all learners and foster an entrepreneurial and voluntary spirit among learners. Conversely, Law N° 2023/007 of July 25, 2023, and the 2030 National Development Strategy paper highlight the need to digitally transform

and professionalise education in the subsector while ensuring that graduates arrive at the workplace ready to perform.

While these recommendations seem feasible, one of the major challenges lies in the fact that 70% of Cameroon's population resides in rural communities with limited access to higher education institutions (World Bank, 2022). Learners desiring to pursue higher education are compelled to relocate to urban areas where they are likely to face high costs of transportation and accommodation at a time when finances are difficult to find. In state universities, the annual tuition fee is 50,000 CFA francs or 76 Euros, and in privately owned universities, it ranges between 300,000 and 1,500,000 CFA francs, equivalent to 460 and 2,300 Euros per year, irrespective of their socioeconomic background (Njeuma, 2021). Despite the variation in tuition fees, learners also bear additional costs for books, transport, and accommodation (MINESUP, 2021). These factors can adversely affect learners desiring to pursue higher education. Amidst these, Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is seen as a cost-effective and scalable model that could widen access to education through the use of digital platforms, virtual classrooms, and flexible study programmes. While the problems abound and the opportunities avails, this researcher formulated the following research question: ***How can higher education institutions use ODL to respond to the increasing demand for higher education?***

The Potential of ODL in Meeting the Increasing Demands for Higher Education

ODL is a form of education delivery that removes geographical and financial barriers, allowing learners, especially those in remote areas, to access quality education without relocating (Zozie & Chawinga, 2018). Globally, ODL is known as a viable solution that reduces costs, expands access, and improves the quality of learning outcomes (Nkwenti, 2023). Owing to the ever-increasing global financial challenges, ODL presents itself as a model of education that minimises physical infrastructure needs by utilising digital platforms (Olakulehin, 2018); eliminates the need for large campus expansions through the use of study centres (Moloi & Mutorwa, 2020); and cuts down operational

expenses by partnering with existing universities instead of constructing new institutions (Ochieng, 2019). The flexibility of the model presents significant benefits to learners of diversified categories and locations while also minimising financial burdens (Etta & Parmentier, 2021).

Opportunities for the Mainstreaming of ODL in Cameroon's Higher Education

Law No. 2023/007 to Lay Down Guidelines on the Organisation and Functioning of Higher Education in Cameroon makes provision for the development of ODL (Republic of Cameroon, 2023). Section 18 of this law clearly states: "Distance Education and cooperative learning shall be recognised and encouraged as ways of developing higher education." This serves as a legal framework legitimising ODL as an accepted learning mode. While most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been exploring the potential of ODL as a viable pathway for education, it is only recently that the Cameroon Ministry of Higher Education took a resolution to embrace this form of learning.

In 2024, MINESUP entered into a partnership agreement with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) as an Intergovernmental Organisation in Commonwealth member countries with a long-standing experience in the development of ODL. The COL is supporting the development of ODL in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cameroon. Serving as a consultant for this project, this author conducted two capacity building Workshops in October 2024 and in March 2025 aimed at empowering delegates from 11 state-owned universities and officials from ministries of education to mainstream ODL in their respective institutions. At the end of the capacity building Workshops, an ODL Policy Framework and Implementation Plan for Higher Education Institutions was developed and validated (MINESUP, 2025). This milestone is expected to assist the MINESUP in meeting the recommendations outlined in Cameroon's Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2023-2030 (MINEPAT, 2023).

Besides, in 2020, MINESUP launched an ambitious project to digitally transform Cameroon universities. The project provided 500, 000 laptop

computers to learners enrolled in both state and private universities in Cameroon; constructed and equipped digital content production centres in nine universities, as well as the Congo-Cameroon Inter-State University; and established a national digital interconnection network centre for Cameroon public universities (Nkwenti, 2023). COL's support in the development and validation of an ODL policy is timely and falls in line with the Ministry's vision to widen access to learning, regulate distance education, and ensure that practitioners meet the required standards.

Literature Review

The increasing demand for higher education in Cameroon has not been commensurate with infrastructural development in HEIs due to the ever-increasing challenges the country is facing (Tchamyou, 2017). Infrastructural limitations, teacher shortages, and limited funding constrain campus-based learning models (Tchoumbou et al., 2022). Amid these, ODL emerged as a strategic alternative, allowing HEIs to deliver education flexibly and at scale. The successful implementation of ODL in Cameroonian HEIs can be effectively understood through the lens of two complementary theoretical frameworks: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Institutional Theory of Organisational Readiness (Weiner, 2009).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains user acceptance of technology based on two core constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness is the degree to which an individual believes that embracing ODL through online delivery would be more cost-effective and flexible than campus-based learning. The perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which an individual believes that using the Learning Management System (LMS) or learning support tools would be free of effort (Davis, 1989). These constructs are central to whether learners and faculty will embrace ODL using digital platforms and tools. For instance, when learners perceive that using an LMS renders learning flexible at a cost-effective rate and is simple to navigate, their likelihood of adopting such

platforms increases. Some researchers concluded that the successful uptake of Moodle-based learning for ODL was closely tied to users' positive perceptions (Bervell & Umar, 2018).

Despite the variation in digital literacy across institutions in Cameroon, a study on digital transformation found that learners are more receptive to e-learning platforms when the technology is intuitive and responsive to their learning needs (Ngatchu & Chibueze, 2020). The researchers added that lecturers who embrace digital transformation and observe improvements in instructional outcomes and reduced workloads are more motivated to integrate these tools into their instructional processes. However, a group of researchers in Cameroon explored the potential of TAM to understand factors that influence faculty adoption of ODL. Their findings showed that low digital skills and a lack of technical support negatively affect perceived ease of use, which in turn lowers the rates of ODL adoption (Tchoumbou, Ngwa, & Kouam, 2022). These findings affirm TAM's applicability in understanding how digital literacy, platform design, and support services can influence the adoption of ODL in Cameroonian HEIs. Since the release of TAM in 1989, many researchers have used it to investigate the acceptance and innovative use of technology in different fields (Zhang & Li, 2017; Muganda, Samzugi & Mallinson, 2016).

Institutional Theory of Organisational Readiness

While TAM is paramount to understanding learners and faculty's acceptance of ODL as an alternative learning model, the Institutional Theory of Organisational Readiness adds a broader organisational perspective (Weiner, 2009). This theory upholds that HEIs will embrace innovations, such as ODL, based on their internal abilities, which include available infrastructure, skilled personnel, committed leadership, and institutional culture. This scenario is further shaped by external influences such as government policy, social expectations, and global trends (Zhu & Engels, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As discussed earlier, the e-National Higher Education Network is an opportunity for HEIs to rapidly embrace ODL. However, many Cameroonian HEIs, especially in the private sector, still face many challenges (Nkwenti, 2023). These include unreliable internet access,

insufficient computer labs, inconsistent electricity supply, inadequate funding, and a lack of institutional strategic vision (Tchoumbou et al., 2022; Ngatchu & Chibueze, 2020). However, research shows that where institutions have invested in internal capacity, such as staff training, digital policy development, and dedicated e-learning centres, the success of ODL programmes is improving (Zhu & Engels, 2014; UNESCO, 2021). HEIs are more likely to implement successful ODL programmes when they harness the potential of digital tools in instructional processes and allocate resources for continuous professional development of faculty. Implementing open and distance learning requires skilled staff and motivated leadership. Professional educators and support staff design, administer, and assess learning materials, impacting learner satisfaction and achievement (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). In rapidly evolving digital contexts, continuing professional development is necessary for instructional quality (Anderson, 2008). Committed leadership encourages ODL innovation and sustainability through strategic vision, resource allocation, and institutional support (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Without effective leadership, well-designed projects may fail owing to insufficient coordination, communication, or policy backing (Tait, 2014).

Figure 1 indicates that the integration of the Technology Acceptance Model and Institutional Theory offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding how to implement ODL in Cameroon: at the individual level, HEIs must ensure that learners and lecturers perceive ODL as leveraging learning flexibly and cost-effectively via technological tools as useful and easy to use. At the organisational level, HEIs must ensure readiness by developing infrastructure, upgrading faculty skills on ODL, providing leadership support and ensuring that the institution's culture is flexible enough to embrace change and global innovation trends. These factors will accelerate the adoption of ODL at institutional levels.

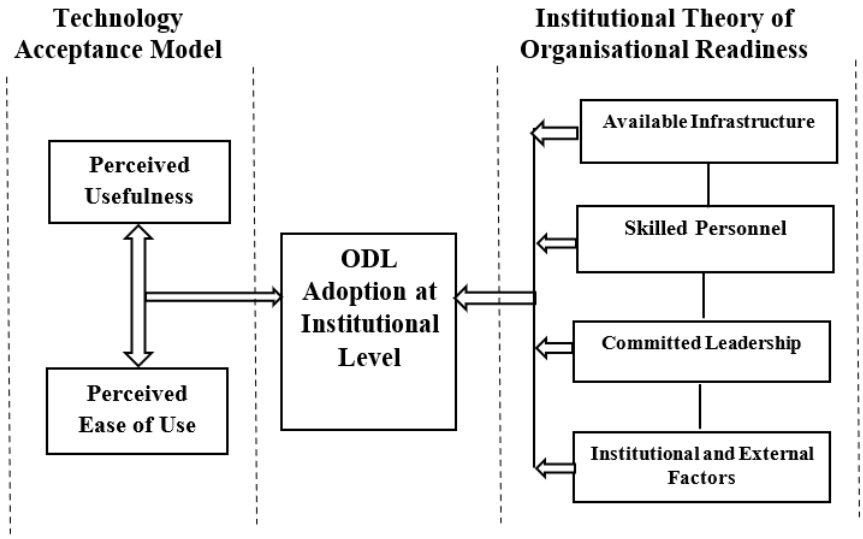

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for the Study

Methodology

This study adopts a survey research design approach to investigate how ODL can be strategically implemented to address the growing demand for higher education in Cameroon, considering the perceptions of faculty members across state and private universities. The study involved a sample of participants from public and private HEIs. The Simple Random Sampling Technique (Amin, 2005) was used to select a total of n = 393 participants from public and credited private HEIs. The questionnaires were formulated based on TAM Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) as well as the Institutional Theory of Organisational Readiness constructs. The research instrument consists of two main sections. The first section incorporates a nominal scale to identify participants' demographic information, notably gender, age range, academic rank and years of teaching experience. The second section uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree to investigate participants' opinion on the conceptual framework for the study. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, the questionnaire was pre-tested with those not taking part

in the study. Further, a reliability analysis was conducted to estimate a reasonable level of reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha test. Cronbach's Alpha recommends that scales should exceed cut-off value of 0.70 (Schmitt, 1996). Based on this scale, each computed test item was above 0.70 and the TAM construction appears to have a good degree of reliability as shown in Table 2. The data was analysis using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means for demographic and Likert scale responses).

Findings

The data was coded and analysed using SPSS version 22 for a descriptive analysis. The participants' demographic information was analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Participants perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, available infrastructure, skilled personnel, committed leadership, institutional culture and external factors measured using a 5-point Likert scale were analysed in terms of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation leading to interpretation based on the objective of this study. At the end of the two-week online data collection process, out of the targeted n = 393 participants, n = 322 responded, giving a response rate of 81.93%.

Table 1 indicates the findings emerging from the analysed demographic information of the participants. It could be observed that 38 HEIs took part in the study, and within the n = 322 participants, n = 200 (62.11%) were males, while n = 122 (37.88%) were females. Most of the participants – 270 (83.9%) are within the age range of 36-40 years, while 35 (10.9%) of them are within the age range of 41-50 years. This, in the opinion of this researcher, constitutes an asset given that if they are trained to effectively roll out ODL in HEIs, the return on investment will be beneficial if and only if they stay in the university system, and, lecturers in Cameroon retire at the age of 65 years old. Again, they have not been in the teaching field for a long time. The majority of them have not taught for more than 16 years. Presumably, they are still young in their teaching careers and so have ambitions to grow in the profession. Their training to prepare and implement ODL might not be too cumbersome. Another asset is that most participants

are still in the early years of their academic careers. This could motivate them to take up innovative practices with ODL.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Participants in Terms of Sex				
	Male	**Female**	**Total**	
	200 (62.11%)	122 (37.88%)	322(100%)	
Type of Institution				
	Public	**Private**	**Total**	
	11	27	38	
Participants	201 (64.42%)	121(37.58%)	322 (100%)	
Age Range				
30–35 Years	**36-40Years**	**41 - 50 Years**	**51+ Years**	
5 (1.6%)	270 (83.9%)	35 (10.9%)	12 (3.7%)	
Teaching experience				
1-5years	**6-10years**	**11 - 15years**	**16-20years**	**21+ Years**
88(27.3%)	96(29.8%)	68(21.1%)	42(13.0%)	28(8.7%)
Academic Rank				
Assistant Lecturer	**Senior Lecturer**	**Associate Professor**	**Professor**	**Total**
98 (30.43%)	112 (34.79%)	75 (23.29%)	37 (11.49%)	322

Table 2 shows participants' perceived usefulness of ODL. The various responses indicate that most of the participants perceive that using ODL platforms will make their teaching more flexible and accessible to learners while also enhancing the effectiveness of their instructional delivery. Furthermore, they see ODL as allowing them to reach more learners than in face-to-face teaching. They believe that ODL is a viable solution to infrastructure limitations in their institutions. As such, implementing ODL will reduce the cost of delivering quality education. The Standard Deviation (STD) shows that most of the participants' responses clustered around the mean. This finding indicates that participants in this study perceive ODL as very useful in enhancing the effectiveness of instructional practices.

Table 2: Perceived Usefulness

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
Using ODL platforms will make my teaching more flexible and accessible to learners.	12 (3.7%)	7 (2.2%)	32 (9.9%)	154 (47.8%)	117 (36.3%)	322	4.14	1.04
ODL delivery will enhance the effectiveness of my instructional practices.	13 (4.1%)	4 (1.2%)	45 (14.0%)	176 (54.7%)	84 (26.1%)	322	4.17	1.08
ODL will allow me to reach more learners compared to face-to-face teaching.	9 (2.8%)	5 (1.6%)	47 (14.6%)	162 (50.3%)	99 (30.7%)	322	4.17	.99
I believe ODL is a viable solution to the infrastructure limitations in my institution.	8 (2.5%)	16 (5.0%)	49 (15.2%)	136 (42.2%)	113 (35.1%)	322	4.14	1.07
Implementing ODL would reduce the cost of delivering quality education.	9 (2.8%)	9 (2.8%)	48 (14.9%)	163 (50.6%)	93 (28.9%)	322	4.07	.97

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 3 summarises participants' perceived ease of using ODL. This data indicates that most of the participants disagree with the statements related to the ease of use of ODL platforms. Most of them disagreed that it is easy to use the ODL platforms provided by their institutions, that they find it simple to integrate digital tools into their teaching activities, that they can independently manage their own online teaching activities without difficulty and that the ODL tools and platforms provided by their institutions are user-friendly. From the different responses, this researcher as an ODL practitioner believes that the participants are new to the concept of ODL and hence know very little about the mode of learning. This view can be observed in the variation of mean scores and standard deviation of each statement, which, in my point of view, reflects participants perceptions of ODL delivery tools for the first time.

Table 3: Perceived Ease of Use

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
I find it easy to use the ODL platforms provided by my institution.	27 (8.4%)	122 (37.9%)	90 (28.0%)	32 (10.0%)	51 (15.8%)	322	3.58	1.36
I find it simple to integrate digital tools into my teaching activities.	23 (7.1%)	128 (39.8%)	92 (28.6%)	30 (9.3%)	49 (15.2%)	322	3.71	1.36
I can independently manage my online teaching activities without difficulty.	38 (11.8%)	61 (18.9%)	147 (45.7%)	59 (18.3%)	17 (5.3%)	322	3.03	1.32
The ODL tools and platforms provided by my institution are user-friendly.	33 (10.2%)	110 (34.2%)	105 (32.6%)	35 (10.9%)	39 (12.1%)	322	3.54	1.46
I feel confident in my ability to assist learners in using ODL platforms.	21 (6.6%)	131 (40.7%)	60 (18.6%)	33 (10.2%)	77 (23.9%)	322	3.88	2.08

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 4 shows the analysed data on participants' perceptions of available infrastructure to ease the implementation of ODL at the institutional level. From the findings, it can be observed that a few of them agreed that their institutions had reliable internet access for teaching online and that there was sufficient access to computers and digital tools that can support the implementation of ODL. However, a good number of them remained neutral, while others disagreed. Again, a few participants agreed that their institutions provide access to a functional learning management system (LMS) needed to support ODL and that the ICT support team is readily available to resolve technical difficulties. While a few agreed, others disagreed, and a considerable number remained neutral. The variation in mean scores and standard deviation indicates the variation in the level of institutional infrastructure development level.

Table 4: Available Infrastructure

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
My institution has reliable internet access for teaching online.	44 (13.7%)	35 (10.9%)	102 (31.7%)	70 (21.7%)	71 (22.0%)	322	3.18	1.54
There is sufficient access to computers and digital tools that can support the implementation of ODL.	36 (11.2%)	35 (10.9%)	131 (40.7%)	61 (18.9%)	59 (18.3%)	322	3.12	1.49
My institution provides access to a functional learning management system (LMS) needed to support ODL.	57 (17.7%)	83 (25.8%)	104 (32.3%)	62 (19.3%)	16 (5.0%)	322	2.78	1.44
The ICT support team is readily available to resolve technical issues.	65 (20.2%)	34 (10.6.%)	75 (17.1%)	71 (22.5%)	77 (23.9%)	322	3.08	2.19

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 5 presents the analysed data on the availability of skilled personnel to implement Open and Distance Learning (ODL). From the responses, a good number of the participants agreed that faculty staff have received some training on how to use e-learning platforms but have a mixed response as to whether technical staff in their institutions were well equipped to support ODL. Similarly, they provided mixed responses, with most of them staying neutral as to whether there were digital content developers to assist with online course design. The mean is clustered around the standard deviation, signifying that most of the participants are unanimous in their responses provided in the different statements.

Table 5: Skilled Personnel

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
Faculty staff have received some training on how to use e-learning platforms.	52 (16.1%)	25 (7.8%)	77 (23.9%)	79 (24.5%)	89 (27.6%)	322	2.96	1.50
Technical staff in my institution are well-equipped to support ODL.	59 (18.3%)	36 (11.2%)	131 (40.7%)	61 (18.9%)	35 (10.9%)	322	3.12	1.49
There are digital content developers to assist with online course design.	71 (22.0%)	35 (10.9%)	102 (31.7%)	70 (21.7%)	44 (13.7%)	322	3.18	1.54
My colleagues are competent in delivering courses online.	34 (10.6.%)	77 (23.9%)	75 (17.1%)	71 (22.5%)	65 (20.2%)	322	3.08	2.19

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 6 shows the findings from the committed leadership construct. Most participants agreed that their institution's leadership supports using ODL and aims to scale up digital and distance education. Some participants disagreed, and a considerable number of them remained neutral. Similarly, most of the participants disagreed that leaders actively allocate resources to enhance ODL delivery. A good number of them remained neutral, while a few acknowledged that leaders actively allocate resources to enhance ODL. However, the majority of the participants agreed that management encourages faculty to integrate digital tools in teaching.

Table 6: Committed Leadership

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
The leadership in my institution supports the use of ODL.	22 (6.8%)	53 (16.5%)	105 (32.6%)	30 (9.3%)	112 (34.8%)	322	3.28	1.16
Institutional goals include scaling up digital and distance education.	69 (21.4%)	57 (17.7%)	138 (42.9%)	29 (9.0%)	29 (9.1%)	322	3.09	1.26

Leaders actively allocate resources to enhance ODL delivery.	33 (10.2%)	110 (34.2%)	105 (32.6%)	35 (10.9%)	39 (12.1%)	322	3.54	1.46
The management encourages faculty to integrate digital tools in teaching.	30 (9.3%)	53 (16.5%)	22 (6.8%)	112 (34.8%)	105 (32.6%)	322	3.28	1.16

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 7 indicates the findings of the institutional culture and external factor construct. The responses indicate that a considerable number of the participants agreed that their institution promotes innovation in teaching and learning and that the transition to ODL will be embraced positively by the teaching community. While others disagreed, a considerable number remained neutral. On the other hand, the majority of the participants agreed that collaboration among faculty members is encouraged for digital learning and that there is a shared belief in the importance of using technology to improve access to education. Also, the majority agreed that the external factors motivating them to adopt ODL are government policies, the success of ODL in other institutions, societal expectations and global educational trends.

Table 7: Institutional Culture and External Factors

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	N	Mean	STD
My institution promotes innovation in teaching and learning.	65 (20.2%)	34 (10.6.%)	75 (17.1%)	71 (22.5%)	77 (23.9%)	322	3.08	2.19
The transition to ODL will be embraced positively by the teaching community.	16 (5.0%)	57 (17.7%)	104 (32.3%)	62 (19.3%)	83 (25.8%)	322	2.78	1.44
Collaboration among faculty members is encouraged for digital learning.	50 (15.5%)	41 (12.8%)	68 (21.1%)	81 (25.2%)	82 (25.5%)	322	2.73	1.60

There is a shared believe in the importance of using technology to improve access to education.	3 (0.9%)	7 (2.1%)	84 (26.1%)	68 (21.1%)	160 (49.7%)	322	3.96	.95
Government policies positively influence my institution's decision to adopt ODL.	14 (4.3%)	12 (3.7%)	40 (12.4%)	176 (54.7%)	80 (24.8%)	322	3.97	.99
The success of ODL in other institutions will motivate my institution to follow suit.	12 (3.7%)	7 (2.2%)	32 (9.9%)	117 (36.3%)	154 (47.8%)	322	4.14	1.04
Societal expectations and global educational trends are pushing my institution towards adopting ODL.	9 (2.8%)	9 (2.8%)	48 (14.9%)	163 (50.6%)	93 (28.9%)	322	4.07	.97

Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), Strongly Agree (SA)

Discussion of Findings

The majority of participants believe that using Online Distance Learning (ODL) platforms will enhance teaching flexibility, accessibility, and effectiveness; reach more learners; and reduce infrastructure limitations in their institutions, ultimately reducing the cost of delivering quality education. These findings correspond to the works of some researchers who uphold that ODL removes geographical and financial barriers, allowing learners, especially those in remote areas, to access quality education without relocating (Zozie & Chawinga, 2018). These findings corroborate with other studies which argue that beneficiaries of a new technology must see its usefulness before they can buy in (Davis, 1989; Bervell & Umar, 2018; Zhang & Li, 2017; Muganda, Samzugi & Mallinson, 2016).

The majority of participants found online distance learning useful but disagreed with the perceived ease of use. They found it difficult to use ODL platforms, integrate digital tools into teaching activities, manage online activities independently, and find the tools user-friendly. This is due to their lack of familiarity with ODL, which negatively affects their perceived ease of use. The researcher, an ODL practitioner, believes this is a concern. These findings support the research of others who studied digital transformation in higher education institutions in Cameroon and found that low digital skills and poor technical help make it harder for people to use online distance learning, which lowers its adoption rates (Tchoumbou, Ngwa, & Kouam, 2022). However, if the institutions put in place user-friendly platforms and develop users' abilities to use various technological tools, it is most likely that faculty will find ODL easier to use (Ngatchu & Chibueze, 2020).

Some participants in the available infrastructure construct reported having reliable internet, enough computers and digital tools for online teaching, a working LMS, and an ICT support team ready to help with technical issues, showing that there is a strong setup for online learning. These findings highlight a contrast to the conclusions of some researchers who found that many Cameroonian HEIs, especially in the private sector, still face significant challenges such as unreliable internet, insufficient computer labs, inconsistent electricity supply, and inadequate funding (Ndongfack, 2023; Tchoumbou et al., 2022; Ngatchu & Chibueze, 2020). While infrastructure is critical in the implementation, ODL HEIs are encouraged to progressively build their infrastructure to accelerate the delivery of ODL.

Skilled personnel are required to adequately implement ODL. The participants acknowledged that faculty staff received training on e-learning platforms but expressed mixed opinions on the technical staff's readiness to support ODL and the availability of digital content developers for online course design. These findings indicate the need to empower different stakeholders with relevant skills to effectively implement ODL. Nevertheless, research shows that where institutions have invested in internal capacity, such as staff training, digital policy development, and dedicated e-learning centres, the success of ODL programmes is improving (Zhu & Engels, 2014; UNESCO, 2021).

Committed leadership is critical in the success of any initiative. The majority of participants in a study agreed that their institutions' leadership supports the use of ODL and aims to scale up digital and distance education. However, some participants disagreed, and others remained neutral. Most participants also disagreed about leaders actively allocating resources to enhance ODL delivery. Despite this, most participants agreed that management encourages faculty to integrate digital tools in teaching. The study underscores the critical role leadership plays in the success of innovation. Research holds that committed leadership encourages ODL innovation and sustainability through strategic vision, resource allocation, and institutional support (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Without effective leadership, well-designed projects may fail owing to insufficient coordination, communication, or policy backing (Tait, 2014).

Institutional culture and external factors play a strategic role in the adoption of ODL. The majority of participants in the study believe their institutions promote innovation in teaching and learning, with the transition to ODL being positively embraced by the teaching community. They also express a shared belief in the importance of technology in improving education access. External factors motivating the adoption of ODL include government policies, successful ODL in other institutions, societal expectations, and global educational trends. These findings corroborate the work of some researchers who argue that institutional culture and external influences such as government policy, social expectations, and global trends (Weiner, 2009; Zhu & Engels, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Recommendations

Build Staff and Technical Support Team Capacity: Many faculties see ODL as advantageous but struggle to apply it due to low digital literacy and support. To empower educators and support staff, institutions should offer continual training on learning management systems, digital content development, and pedagogical technology integration.

Upgrade Digital Infrastructure and User-friendly Platforms: Lack of internet, digital tools, and technical support hinders ODL success. HEIs

should expand infrastructure gradually, stressing economical, accessible solutions and intuitive, mobile-compatible systems to improve usage.

Promote Committed, Resourceful Leadership: Leadership support exists, but resource allocation and strategic direction are lacking. To promote ODL, leaders must allocate finances, create digital transformation targets, and integrate them into institutional policies and quality frameworks.

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