



## Applying Dual Flexible Open Schooling System to Universal Basic Education: A Panacea for Accomplishing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria

### Application du Système D'Enseignement à Distance Flexible à Double Coursus à L'Éducation de Base Universelle: Une Panacée Pour Atteindre L'Objectif 4 du Développement Durable au Nigeria

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#### Abstract

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*The paper examined the concept of the Dual Flexible Open Schooling system, the Nigerian version of the open schooling system of education, the place of open schooling in widening access, cost-efficiency and quality education at Universal Basic Education (UBE) levels in Nigeria. The paper also explained the possible applicability of the Dual Flexible Open Schooling System, to Universal Basic Education as a panacea to accomplishing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria. In specific terms, the paper discussed how dual flexible open schooling strategy, which is a form of open and distance eLearning, can be introduced in Universal Basic Education in Nigeria vis-a-vis the primary and secondary schools. The paper explored the concept of open schooling, the Open Schooling System via the Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria, UBE's latest initiatives of the Open Schooling System, and the Commonwealth of Learning intervention in the UBE programme. The paper also identified strategies to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) via the Dual Flexible open schooling System and its implications for the Nigeria Education System. Also discussed in the paper, is why Nigeria needs Dual Flexible Schooling or Open Schooling System. The paper identified Instructional materials and equipment used mainly in open schooling system including print (Textbooks, pamphlets, handouts, study guides, manuals), Audio (Cassettes, microphone, podcast) Visual (Charts, real objects, photographs, transparencies) Audio-visual (Slides, tapes, films, filmstrips, television, video, multimedia) Electronic Interactive (Computers, graphing calculators, tablets)*

**Key words:** *Dual flexible open schooling system; flexible curriculum; Nigerian open schooling programme ; education for all; SDG 4; lifelong learning*

## **Resume**

*Ce travail explique le concept du système de l'enseignement à distance flexible à double cursus, la version nigériane du système des écoles de l'enseignement à distance, la signification de l'école ouverte pour élargir l'accès, la rentabilité et la qualité de l'éducation au niveau de l'éducation de base universelle au Nigeria. Le travail a également expliqué la possibilité l'enseignement à distance flexible à double cursus à l'éducation de base universelle comme une panacée pour atteindre l'objectif de développement durable 4 au Nigeria. En termes concrets, l'article explique comment la stratégie de l'enseignement ouvert flexible et double, qui est une forme d'apprentissage en ligne ouvert et à distance, peut être introduite dans l'éducation de base universelle au Nigeria, dans les écoles primaires et secondaires. Le travail a examiné le concept de scolarisation à distance, le système de scolarisation à distance par le biais du programme d'éducation de base universelle au Nigeria, les dernières initiatives du système de scolarisation à distance, l'intervention du Commonwealth of Learning dans le programme UBE. Le travail identifie également des stratégies pour atteindre l'objectif de développement durable 4 (SDG4) par le biais d'un système de scolarisation ouverte flexible et ses implications pour le système éducatif nigérian. L'article aborde également la question de savoir pourquoi le Nigeria a besoin d'un système de scolarisation flexible ou d'un système de scolarisation ouvert. Le document identifie le matériel pédagogique utilisé principalement dans le système de scolarisation ouvert, à savoir les documents imprimés (manuels scolaires, brochures, photocopiés, guides d'étude, manuels), audio (cassettes, micro, podcast), visuels (graphiques, objets réels, photographies, transparents), audiovisuels (diapositives, bandes, films, bandes de film, télévision, vidéo, multimédia), électroniques interactifs (ordinateurs, calculatrices graphiques, tablettes).*

**Mots clés:** *Système dual de scolarisation flexible ouvert; programme flexible; programme nigérian de scolarisation ouverte ; éducation pour tous ; ODD 4 ; apprentissage tout au long de la vie.*

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## Introduction

### Applying Dual Flexible Open Schooling System to Universal Basic Education: A Panacea for Accomplishing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria

In this paper, the dual flexible open schooling system is not different from the open schooling system practised in India Open System (The National Institute of Open Schooling) (NIOS) and other parts of the world including the UBE pilot open schooling system currently practised on six states of Nigeria. . What might be different is the strategy proposed in this paper for its implementation. Dual flexible open schooling system as conceptualized in the paper is a form of open schooling system that allows learners to learn in both conventional face-face classroom system and outside the regular classroom system using the same curricula and instructional learning materials, oscillating between both systems in terms of attendance, which is at their conveniences. *The Dual flexible open schooling system employs a conventional face-to-face classroom system of education with open and distance learning strategies as instructional delivery methods.* Instructional materials used mainly in the open schooling system include:

Print (Textbooks, pamphlets, handouts, study guides, manuals), Audio (Cassettes, microphone, podcast) Visual (Charts, real objects, photographs, transparencies) Audio-visual (Slides, tapes, films, filmstrips, television, video, multimedia) Electronic Interactive (Computers, graphing calculators, tablets) **Instructional materials – Wikipedia** [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instructional\\_materials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instructional_materials)

Thus, the Dual Flexible Open Schooling system concept focuses on a model or pattern that aims at modifying the curricula of the regular conventional schools' organisation to more flexible curricula that can be used for both out-of-school and regular school programmes. This proposal aims at transforming organisational structures and curricula of the traditional face-to-face classroom into open schooling system via distance eLearning mode where the same learner can oscillate between the two using the same curriculum at his or her convenience.

## Concept of Open Schooling

The Commonwealth Education Partnerships (2007) definition of open school would serve as a conceptual framework for this paper.

“Open schooling system is the physical separation of the school-level learner from the teacher, and the use of alternative teaching methodologies, and where feasible, ICT to bridge the separation and deliver the education and training”.

Open learning is ‘an umbrella term’ for education or learning, that removes barriers to learning whether in terms of time, place or space (<https://sscoaching.in>>Difference-open-distance-learning).

In other words, the open school system is relatively devoid of regular school attendance; time, rigid organisational structure and regular meetings with a facilitator. The facilitation of tutorial classes in this system is driven by the learner’s desire for it, and at his or her convenience. The open schooling programmes are delivered majorly through Open and distance learning. As Phillips (1994) believes, open, schooling is conceptualised distinctively by many individuals and different countries. The system is another means of utilising instructional delivery that generally widens access, more cost-efficient and quality-based approaches via distance schooling strategies and open learning, to convey “universal Basic Education ” (p.149). The most attractive nature of the open schooling system is its flexible mode in admission, enrolment and choice of courses, where to study, when to study, attendance of tutorials only when necessary and choice of instructional materials. According to Philips (1994), Open Schooling is currently a suitable and possible instructional delivery option at the school level brought about by the absence of qualified instructors and “well-equipped schools, a situation that prevails in many developing countries today.

In an open school system, the tutorial facilitators conduct instructions through either occasional face-to-face classroom sessions or prints, or audio, visual, audio-visual, or electronic interactions. Tutorial facilitations meetings are either physical or virtual. Occasional facilitations become necessary to assist learners who need help in

navigating through difficult parts of self-learning materials and linking students learning to the self-learning materials.

The tutorial facilitation must be student-driven that is, facilitation only occurs when the student(s) calls for it. The facilitation must be problem-driven that is, it centred on areas of the self-learning materials where students need more clarifications and facilitation sessions attendance are not compulsory. Countries that adopt dual open school systems often use community centres, churches, schools, non-governmental organisations etc. as learning centres where facilitators can meet the students. For example in 1979, India commissioned an Open School known as a “project” of the Central Board of Secondary Education, Delhi. Open schooling in Australia for “primary distance education” commenced in 1914. Another “primary programme for distance” students in British Columbia, Canada, was created in 1989. National Open School (NOS) in India established in 1979 is probably the biggest of its sort (offering optional education through distance learning mode) in the Commonwealth (Philips 1994).

COL (2020) opined that no specific form of open schooling suits every country's circumstances and therefore each country chooses an open schooling form of learning that fits its needs. COL (2020) defines open schooling as using distance education methods to ensure that school learning can continue without or with the presence of teachers and learners to be in the same space at the same time. COL further explained that, via distance education, every remote learner receives education ([www.col.org](http://www.col.org)).

COL (2020) argued that there is no right way of offering open schooling. According to COL, it had worked with ministries and institutions all over the Commonwealth to develop models of provision that are appropriate for different contexts. The COL (2020) explains further that, appropriate models, if employed, improve access and retention, as well as improve the quality of learning and outcomes. In addition, COL (2020) observes that using open educational resources (OER), implementing open, distance, e-learning methods, and employing open educational practices aimed at reducing the costs per successful learner ([www.col.org](http://www.col.org)). The concept of open learning and

distance education system focuses on open access to education and training to make the learners free from the constraints of time and place and offer flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. COL affirmed that ODL mode opens doors to those students who need a second chance to develop further their learning skills to get into business or further learning and prepare long life learning ([www.col.org](http://www.col.org)).

The concept of dual flexible open schooling system in this paper was adopted from UNESCO's "Salamanca declaration" of June 199, in Spain. The declaration included:

Reforming organisation and pedagogy in the regular school system to respond positively to pupil diversity. In Orientating regular schools towards effective inclusive education, the regular system requires changes and modifications in learning content, approaches, structures and strategies, providing a common vision covering all children of appropriate age in the regular school system, making inclusive education the obligatory responsibility of the regular system to educate all children ([www.ibe.unesco.org](http://www.ibe.unesco.org)),

### **Open Schooling System via Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria**

According to Gidada & Alabi (2006), the utilization of Open Schooling in primary and secondary schools is one more approach to bringing open and distance learning to use in pre-tertiary education. They are of the view that, with the start of the Universal Basic Education Programme in September 1999, there was a pressing need 'to organise primary, and secondary schools in states and local governments to increase enrolment at these levels of education. Gidada & Alabi (2006) reveal that the programme has been able to prepare states, local governments and their resources to ensure that more pupils are enrolled in primary and junior secondary schools; and the transition rate to Junior Secondary Schools is significantly raised to meet EFA targets. The UBE programme is a change measure, which pointed toward bridging disparity in Educational opportunity at the basic level in terms of both access and quality.

These are in addition UBE provides greater access to and ensures the quality of basic education throughout the country. (Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004). “The Federal Government’s intervention under this Act shall only be an assistance to the states and local governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria”.

An important component of the UBE programme is the commitment to enhancing education for disadvantaged groups. A significant part of the UBE programme is the obligation to improve training and education for women and nomadic groups. Nomadic pastoralists and migrant fishing communities are groups, due to their occupations and the centrality of child labour in their production systems have not been able to participate in formal conventional schooling. Itinerant pastoralists and transient fishing networks are groups, because of their occupations and the centrality of children participating in their processes of production, they have not had the option to partake in face-to-face classroom learning. Out of an estimated population of 10 million nomads, 3.6 million are children of school age. The literacy rate is 0.2% for nomadic pastoralists whose population is 6.5 million and 2.0% among the 2.8 million migrant fishing folks (FME 2003:39). Since there are generally high dropout rates and lower completion rates in nomadic schools in contrast to regular schools, the UBE programme will provide more access and quality education to this group in the country.

The UBE’s basic problems of poor planning, poor funding, inadequate facilities, ill-prepared and half-baked teaching personnel as well as the poor motivation of teachers, poor working environment for teachers and lack of proper monitoring and supervision of the programme can be ameliorated through the Open schooling programme. In addition, open schooling will provide greater access to and ensure the quality of basic education throughout the country. (Free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004). The Federal Government’s intervention under this Act shall only be an assistance to the states and local governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria” The introduction of open schooling is geared

towards eliminating these problems associated with the implementation of UBE.

### **UBE Latest Initiatives of the Open Schooling System**

As exemplified by the various attempts made by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the regular face-to-face classroom system through the UBE programme to provide greater access, higher quality, and at lower cost but have not yielded the desired dividends. This is because the present system as structured requires mobilising large-scale finances for additional schools, teachers, and requisite equipment and other infrastructural facilities (FME2008:20: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). Pant (2015) advocates that in the “Dual Schooling System”, the following techniques could be used to achieve the objective of providing wide access to quality education at cost efficiency:

1. Self-paced learning bundles that empower students to work independently founded on print material enhanced with sound and video tapes, CDs, DVDs, and so on
2. The mixed-mode concentrate permits self-study to enhance bunch work, studios, instructional exercises, and other organized exercises.
3. Online study permits the student to utilize online assets on PCs through the Internet. This might be in self-concentrate mode or collaboration with companions and educators through a visit, email, webcam, voice message, and so on.
4. Video conferencing, at an advantageous area, provides closer collaboration with the educator without voyaging significant distances
5. Audio conferencing, in which the phone is used to interact with the instructor, guide, or peers.

Pant (2015) emphasises further that:

“It is important to ensure that the curricula content and process of a certain skill area deliver what is needed to practise the occupation in a real work situation. Realising that work transforms knowledge into experience generates significant personal and social values, such as creativity, self-reliance, and cooperation; the linking of learning with work from the primary stage onwards should be an important teaching-learning strategy.”



What makes the most significant difference between a regular face-face classroom system and open learning is curriculum flexibility and a flexible content delivery system. The Open Schooling System curriculum should be flexible in terms of admission, time, space, content, methodology, and evaluation process.

### **Why Nigeria needs Dual Flexible Schooling or Open Schooling System**

A review Report driven by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on December 11, 2018, reveals that the number of out-of-school Children (OOSC) in Nigeria increased from 10.5 million to 13.2 million and 60% of this number are girls (Education/UNICEF Nigeria (October 4, 2018 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). Also indicated by the report is that a large portion of the out-of-school was from Nigeria's northern provinces of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa extending to the territories of Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, and Katsina where Boko Haram and bandits have disrupted educational programmes (Education/UNICEF Nigeria 2018 and Education/UNICEF Nigeria, 2015 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). The UNICEF (2018) report points out that school attendance is hampered by “destitution, obliviousness, cultural and religious practice” particularly among girls in northern Nigeria.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic 2020, Northern state governors of Nigeria restricted the Almajiri system of schooling, an action designed to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus and insecurity (Njoku, 2020, Punch Newspaper 2020; and Premium 7 May, 2020 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). Njoku, (2020) explains that UNICEF upheld the arrival of these Almajiris to their various states and their effective unity with their families. Out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria constitute an enormous threat to security. Njoku, (2020) expresses that, the Northern Nigeria governors additionally chose to incorporate the Almajiri arrangement of schooling into the Universal Basic Education framework [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

According to UBE (2010), the National Framework for the Development and Integration of Almajiri Education into the UBE Programme was put in place. The second population of out- of- school children in Nigeria are in Almajiri schools system, numbering 4-

5million. (Training | UNICEF Nigeria 29 Jun 2020 <http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/post/page> [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org))  
However, this represents a principal challenge to achieving the objective of Education for All. (UNESCO Education for All 2000 to 2015 report and Nigeria-instruction UBEC (2010 and UNICEF 2015 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

The past endeavours made by the Federal and Northern States in Nigeria to incorporate the Almajiri, which occurred between December 2010 and May 2015, were not effective (Nigeria | Relief Web 2015, Shittu and Olaofe 2015 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). As reported by Premium Times Official by Agency Report, (February 6, 2020), the Federal Government of Nigeria set out to build and equip 165 Almajiri Integrated Model schools in 18 of the 19 Northern states. Furthermore, the Integrated Model schools were abandoned or changed to other uses by different state governors. As expressed by UBEC (2010) UBEC open school programme aimed at mopping up out-of-school children.

In Nigeria, an introduction of the Open Schooling Programme is the latest initiative taken to bring education to the doorstep of the 13.2 million Out-Of-School Children in Nigeria. As part of its strategy to increase school enrolment in Nigeria, the UBEC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the COL, on Open Schooling ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)). According to UNICEF (June 21, 2022) ‘a recent report has revealed that Nigeria has the unenviable record of domiciling the world’s largest number of out-of-school children. In Nigeria presently, as reported by Rahama Farah, the head of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) office in Kano, “there are 18.5 million out-of-school children, 60% of whom are girls.” In Nigeria, the out-of-school phenomenon is still growing at an alarming rate”. This is still happening despite the huge resources expended since the Commission came into being.

UNICEF (2022) opines that “It is also not surprising that out of the 18.5 million out-of-school children, the bulk of that figure comes from the northern parts of the country, where religious, cultural and traditional practices inhibit formal education for children”.

Unfortunately, this is happening in a country where education from primary to junior secondary levels is supposed to be free.

### **Commonwealth of Learning Intervention in UBE Programme**

The Memorandum of Understanding entered into between the Federal Government of Nigeria and COL midwived the Open schooling programme in Nigeria. One of the goals of the Open School Programme is to give opportunities for students that have exited the conventional face-face classroom system to finish their schooling. What is more important is that the programme is set out to provide opportunities for learners that exited the regular schools as well as those in school yet who are not learning to acquire professional skills. (Premium Times Nigeria February 6, 2020)

Open Schooling Programme in Nigeria is fundamentally "to address the requirements of Out-Of-School Children in six northern states" (Premium Times· February 6, 2020) The MOU between the COL and the UBEC, was to prepare and create author through the Open Education Resources OER). The trainees included 51 content developers and 60 state centre managers, as well as members of the UBEC task team and its sister agencies (Premium Times Nigeria February 6, 2020, UBEC/COL (2021[www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com))). The main aim of this MOU is to incorporate the open schooling programme into the Universal Basic Education programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria all geared towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). The Federal Government has selected six northern states for the pilot phase of its Open Schooling Programme (OSP). The programme that was launched in early 2019 is an open learning programme aimed at reducing the high number of out-of-school children in the country. The beneficiaries, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kano, Adamawa and Niger, are among the 10 states that, according to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), are worst hit by the problem.

## **Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) Via Dual Flexible open schooling System and its Implications for the Nigeria Education System**

At the United Nations/ UNESCO Incheon Education 2030 goal summit in South Korean held in conjunction with UNICEF, World Bank, UNEPA, UNDP, UN-Women and UNHCR, made an explicit statement prescribing steps to take in “implementation of sustainable development goal 4”. In another summit convoked on September 25 to 27, 2015 in New York, the member states of the United Nations formally accepted Goal 4 Quality Education, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (UNESCO, 2015 [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)) “The agenda contains 17 goals, including a new global education goal, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4). SDG 4 has seven targets and three means of implementation (UNESCO, 2000-2015) <https://sdg4education2030.org>the-goal> (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>). The SDG 4 is in line with the main focus of this discussion, which is about ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org))

The SDG 4 of UNESCO (2000 -2015) indicated that Goal 4 Quality Education document has seven targets for 2030 ([www.unesdoc.unesco.org](http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org)) The objectives namely:

Target 4.1 is to guarantee by year 2030, all young women and young men complete free, impartial, and quality essential and auxiliary training prompting significant and successful learning results.

Target 4.2 is to guarantee by year 2030 all young women and young men approach quality youth advancement, care, and pre-essential schooling, so they are prepared for essential training.

Target 4.3 is to guarantee by year 2030 all women and men to reasonable and quality specialized, professional, and tertiary schooling, including college.

Target 4.4 is to guarantee by year 2030 the quantity of adolescents and grown-ups who have applicable abilities, including specialized and

professional abilities, for business, nice positions, and business venture access expanded significantly.

Target 4.5 is to guarantee by year 2030 orientation aberration instruction is disposed of and guarantee equivalent admittance to all degrees of schooling and professional preparation for the defenceless, incorporating people with handicaps, native individuals, and kids in weak circumstances.

Target 4.6 is to guarantee by year 2030 all adolescents and a significant extent of grown-ups, all kinds of people, get education and numeracy.

Target 4.7 is to guarantee by year 2030 all students procure the information and abilities expected to advance:

- a) Education for supportable turn of events and maintainable ways of life, basic freedoms, orientation balance, advancement of a culture of harmony and peacefulness, worldwide citizenship,
- b) Instruction that upgrades enthusiasm for social variety and of culture's commitment to practical advancement UNESCO 2015) (<https://unstats.un.org>

### **UNESCO's Strategies as Earmarked for Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) are as follows:**

One of the strategies for the implementation of the proposal by UNESCO is to Build and upgrade educational facilities that substantially accommodate the peculiarities of physically challenged learners, and gender sensitivity and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all. Thus, these targets address the need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe, inclusive environments that nurture learning for all, regardless of background or disability status ([www.sdg4education2030](http://www.sdg4education2030))

The Federal Government of Nigeria's low budgetary allocation to education has made it extremely difficult for UBEC to implement the aforementioned strategy. Olufemi (2020) reveals that, "in 2016, the education sector got N369. 6 billion — 7.9 per cent of the total budget, N550. 5 billion was allotted in 2017, representing 7.4 per cent of the total budget; N605.8 billion in 2018 -7.04 percent; N620.5 billion –

7.05 per cent of the 2019 budget and N671. 07 billion (6.7 per cent) in the 2020 appropriation bill.”

The authors advocate for a drastic change in implementation strategy from rigid regular school organisations, teaching methods, and pedagogy to curricula reflecting flexibility in contents, approaches, and structures that will invariably take care of all children learning needs vis-à-vis dual flexible open schooling.

## **Conclusion**

The paper advocates the use of Dual Flexible Open Schooling system in UBE educational programme in Nigeria. The Nigerian version of the open schooling system of education via UBE will widen access, cost-efficiency and quality education at primary, and secondary schools levels of education. The paper also recommended the applicability of the Dual Flexible Open Schooling System, to Universal Basic Education as a panacea to accomplishing Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Nigeria. The paper suggested a take-home point as dual flexible open schooling allowing learners to learn in both conventional face-face classroom systems and out of regular classroom systems using the same curricula and instructional learning materials, oscillating between both systems in terms of attendance at their convenience.

This system should run a face-to-face conventional classroom system and flexible open schooling (use of technology) side-by-side in the primary and secondary school systems and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is envisaged that if this proposal is adopted and implemented it will go a long way to widening access to quality education, making education cost-efficient and effectively catering for the educational and training needs of all categories of people in our society, not only for Out Of School Children.

## **Recommendation**

The paper makes the following recommendations

- 1) The pilot test of the UBE open schooling programme introduced in 2019 in six states should be extended to all states of the Federation since insecurity has made it difficult for its implementation in the Northern States.
- 2) The basic Instructional materials that open schooling programme can choose from depending on their needs, cost and availability include: Print (Textbooks, pamphlets, handouts, study guides, manuals), Audio (Cassettes, microphone, podcast) Visual (Charts, real objects, photographs, transparencies) Audio-visual (Slides, tapes, films, filmstrips, television, video, multimedia) Electronic Interactive (Computers, graphing calculators, tablets) should be provided in all designated community learning centres.
- 3) Training should be organised for community resource persons that will be used for the UBE open schooling programme.
- 4) Dual flexible open schooling strategy should be incorporated into the UBE open schooling programme.
- 5) More research should be carried out on UBE open schooling programmes.

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