



Policy Guidelines and Challenges in Quality Assurance in Distance Learning in Kenyan Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Distance Learning (DL) has been embraced by schools, colleges and universities around the world. Distance Learning is causing a revolution in higher education in Kenya. The country is opting for Distance Learning models in order to help meet growing demands for higher education places and meet the country's national development goals within diminishing resources. However, there has been a problem in that many Kenyans still remain skeptical not only about the concept of distance learning but also about the potential quality of the programmes. The purpose of this study was to examine the existing standards and mechanisms put in place to ensure quality in DL in Kenyan public universities with a focus on the practices and processes of quality assurance in the core functions of all DL programmes. The objectives of the study were: to find out the policies and guidelines governing quality assurance in Distance Learning, to evaluate the extent to which the DL programmes fulfill the set quality assurance objectives and to identify the major issues confronting the successful adoption and sustained use of these mechanisms. The study focused on the fundamental features of the institutional operations which include: Institution mission, institution organizational structure, institution resources, curriculum and instruction, academic staff qualification and faculty support, student support and student learning outcome. The main findings indicated that there were no clear written policies or guidelines on DL programmes at the national level. At the institutional level, some of the challenges faced in ensuring quality in DL included: inadequate resources, poor infrastructure and support for distance learning, poor teaching/learning practices, scarcity of computing resources for technology enhanced distance education among others. The study therefore recommends that: the government formulates a policy on Open and Distance Education, the institutions to set and maintain standards for quality assurance in the various DL programmes and establish structures for management of various DL programmes showing distinctions from the different modes of provision. The study may be significant to policy makers, accreditation bodies and institutions involved in Distance learning programmes to evaluate and enhance their quality assurance mechanism so that they can improve the quality of their services to the students.

Keywords: *Distance Learning, Policy Guidelines, Quality Assurance, Universities*

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In modern society, higher education has become a critical rite of passage (Pityan, 2004).

Positive developments are gradually changing the environment and the climate of engagement for higher education. A growing crisis in the higher education sector over the last two decades has given rise to a multiplicity of new organizational structures designed for meeting the new challenges of post-secondary education and training. This has led to the concept of distance learning being embraced by schools, colleges and universities around the world. Due to the fact that there is possibility of creating increased access to higher education under constrain of diminishing resources, Distance Learning has become the best alternative channel for higher education for a growing number of African states.

2. DISTANCE LEARNING IN KENYA

Distance education is causing a revolution in higher education in Kenya. The country has opted for Distance learning models in order to help meet growing demands for higher education places and meet the country's national development goals within diminishing

resources. A number of factors account for the emergence of these structures among them the steady reduction in the funding of public universities, the need to expand educational opportunities to significantly larger numbers of school leavers and major changes in the labour market which create new requirements for life long learning. The Kenyan government is committed to distance education like any other government in Africa.

The first Government policy to address distance higher education was the Act of Parliament of 1966 which established the Board of Adult Education highlighted in Ominde report. The report recommended the establishment of correspondence course unit soon after independence (Republic of Kenya, 1966)

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 Distance Education be updated and expanded to cope with the growing demand for adult education through distance teaching (Republic of Kenya, 1988).



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 expanding university education to as many Kenyans as possible. The report, however, cautioned against basing the Open University on the current restrictive system practiced 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 (Republic of Kenya, 1995 in Juma, 2004).

The Koech Report of 1999 hailed 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 (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

Chale and Michaud, in Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004, describe Kenyan distance education as predominantly split between public (e.g. ministries) and private sector (e.g. colleges) provision. Most programmes are delivered using dual-mode delivery including residential and external study. They noted that problems with funding, expertise and the lack of necessary ICT and audio-visual equipment has hindered attempts to offer courses using distance methods and found that communication was often difficult. However, in recent years there have been moves to improve the ICT infrastructure in the Kenyan education system. In 2001 the Kenya Education Network (KENET) was set up to help improve the ICT capacity of higher education institutions in Kenya (public universities, private universities, national polytechnics, and other institutions offering technical and professional courses). This was supported by the Kenyan government and the US via USAID, the Leyland Initiative and Insight Technologies (Agatu, 2001 in Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004).

DL programmes remain tiny components of higher education and government involvement is quite minimal (Juma, 2004). The University of Nairobi offers an external degree programme for the Bachelor of Education in Arts based subjects, a postgraduate diploma in education and an extramural continuing education programme by the distance mode (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004). The School of Continuing Education at Kenyatta University runs mainly education programmes for the B.Ed. in Primary, Secondary and M.Ed. for Primary Teacher Education (PTE). The programmes were started in August 1998 for two main reasons: To upgrade both primary and secondary school teachers in the country and to generate income for the university in the light of sharply declining funding by the government.

The main regional provider is the African Virtual University (AVU). The AVU is a regional and inter-governmental DL institution based in Nairobi. The AVU

was established to help address some of the key problems of African higher education such as higher education places to meet demand; government budgetary constraints; expensive and oversubscribed private tertiary institutions; a need for skills upgrading in the labour force; and African isolation from the Global Knowledge Society. The AVU offers electronic distance learning programmes to provide students and professionals in Africa with skills that can support economic development in their home countries. (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004)

Overseas providers also offer courses directly or use local agents that have responsibilities ranging from administration to organizing teaching. For example, Kenya College of Accountancy organizes courses from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of London has an arrangement with the Kenya School of Professional Studies. Other international providers offering distance education in Kenya include Cambridge International College, the Indian Management Training Institute, the International Correspondence University and New Port University.

Juma (2004) cites the following DL delivery modes used in Kenya: Print Based Distance Education, Institution – Based Mode of Study, Mixed Mode Provision Satellite and Web based Distance Education

In the attempt to improve on the state of DL today, Kenya has been involved in some innovative and visionary developments. They include the recent establishment of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) in a conference of African Vice Chancellors/Presidents devoted to the development of distance in Africa (Pityan, 2004). ACDE seeks to achieve the following goals:

- a) to promote open and distance learning, flexible learning and continuing education in Africa;
- b) to promote research and training in open and distance learning in Africa;
- c) to contribute to the development of policies essential to the advancement of open and distance learning;
- d) to foster continental and global collaboration in open distance learning;
- e) to provide a forum where individuals, organizations and governments can deliberate on policy matters on open distance learning;
- f) to promote the development of appropriate methods and technologies in education and training relevant to open and distance learning;
- g) to provide a forum for interaction, sharing and dissemination of ideas on open distance learning.

Concern over Quality in Distance Learning

In the last decade, many countries have experienced a growing concern for quality in higher education (including use of DL). The manifestations of this concern and the reasons for it vary from country and



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its state of economic development. The concern for quality in higher education comes from several quarters: Government which is the paymaster, citizens who pay taxes, employers of graduates, students and their parents, teachers, professors and managers in the universities.

Although there is clearly an international consensus that quality in higher education is important, there is no international agreement concerning the meaning of quality in higher education. According to Green (1994), Quality in higher education is a pervasive but elusive concept; it is multi-faceted and embraces three broad aspects: goals; the process deployed for achieving goals and how far goals are achieved.

Kenya is one of the many countries concerned with quality in higher education especially in DL. Distance learning has become an alternative channel for higher education especially under the prevailing circumstances when the country is experiencing a high demand for higher education under limited resources for residential programmes. This study is intended to identify the standards and mechanisms put in place in our Kenyan public universities to ensure quality in DL programmes.

3. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Kenya is faced with a major task of large numbers of qualified students who cannot be admitted into residential university programmes due to limited facilities. The effect has been accumulation of a high number of people qualified for university education but fail to join for residential programmes despite the fact that some of these universities offer Distance Learning programmes. Although Distance Learning remains one of the best alternative channels for increasing enrollment in higher education, majority of Kenyans are still hesitant to embrace it because they still lack information about the quality of DL programmes. Even employers, government and parents still lack confidence in Distance Education (Juma, 2004). There is no universal appeal for DL among the would be learners. Suspicions remain about the quality of qualification acquired through DL and this has led to the stigma of inferiority attached to DL (Pityan, 2004).

4. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine the existing standards and mechanisms put in place to assure quality and growth in Distance Learning in Kenyan public universities and the extent to which the set guidelines and policies have been implemented.

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the regulations, guidelines and policies put in place to assure quality in DL programmes in Kenyan public Universities.
2. To evaluate the extent to which the DL programmes fulfill the set quality assurance guidelines.

3. Challenges in ensuring quality in DL in Kenyan public universities

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What guidelines and policies are put in place to assure quality in DL programmes in Kenyan public Universities?
- ii. To what extent do the DL programmes fulfill the set quality assurance guidelines?
- iii. What challenges are encountered in assuring quality in Distance Learning?

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study specifically examined the standards and mechanisms put in place to assure quality in Distance Learning in Kenyan public universities, an area that has not been looked into by any researcher. Through this study, gaps leading to poor quality in DL programmes in Kenyan public Universities would be identified. This will be of great importance to policy makers, accreditation bodies and institutions involved in Distance Learning programmes. They will be able to evaluate and enhance their quality assurance mechanism so that they can improve the quality of their services to the students. By assuring the integrity and quality of DL, the confidence of the employers, government and prospective learners will be guaranteed and therefore, they will be able to embrace DL hence catering for the ever increasing demand for higher education.

7. ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

The assumption of this study was that all the universities providing DL programmes have designated mechanisms for Quality Assurance in DL.

8. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The area of the study was limited to Kenyan public Universities. The study was confined to the 3 sampled universities. In the sampled universities, the study was confined to examining the standards and mechanisms put in place to assure quality in DL programmes and the challenges faced by the universities in assuring the quality.

9. CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

This study was conceptualized on seven key areas of institutional activity when examining the quality of DL as outlined in CHEA monograph series No.1. Presented in Figure 1, the features include:

- (i) Institution Mission
- (ii) Institutional organization

- (iii) Institutional resources
- (iv) Curriculum and instruction
- (v) Faculty support
- (vi) Student support
- (vii) Student learning outcome.
- (viii)

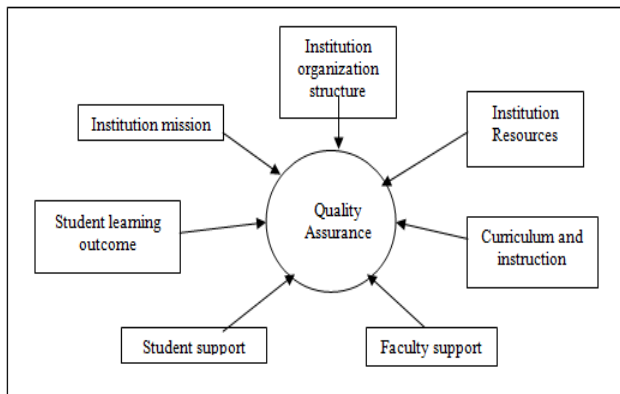


Figure 1: Elements influencing quality in DL (adapted from CHEA Monograph series No.1)

10. LITRATURE REVIEW

Quality Assurance in Kenyan Universities

In the study; International Quality Review and Distance Learning: Lessons from five countries, Middlehurst and Woodfield (2004) cited the following findings on the approach to quality assurance in Kenyan universities in general:

- a) They found out that Commission for Higher Education (CHE) is the sole accrediting and quality assurance body for higher education and is concerned with accrediting private universities. Currently accreditation is only applicable for private institutions wishing to achieve university status. Other Government ministries are expected to regulate institutions that they have established (e.g. the Ministry of Health and the Medical Training College) as well as programmes for the training of their personnel by other providers.
- b) Public universities are responsible for the quality of their own courses, although some feel that the CHE accreditation system is more rigorous than university quality assurance measures and suggest that it should be used for the accreditation of new programmes. Public and accredited universities are responsible, under the direction of CHE, for any other institutions offering their programmes.

Quality Assurance in DL in Kenyan Universities

Middlehurst and Woodfield found from The British Council reports that qualifications obtained

through the DL route appear to have fewer problems with recognition. There are plans for a new government Bill where it is expected that all higher education institutions, including trans-national, for-profit, private and electronic providers will be accredited by the CHE. However, the rules for electronic and other distance education programmes are expected to be different to residential programmes. In addition, there has been effort in the policy making arena to ensure that standards are comparable to residential programmes (Njine, 2002).

11. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. It involved both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Interviews, documentary analysis and questionnaire were primarily used in data collection.

Study Area

The study was carried out in the Kenyan public Universities. Currently, Kenya has 7 public universities and 17 private universities. Although they are administratively autonomous, public universities receive part of their funding from the Ministry of Education, the remainder coming from student fees. However, government funding has still been unable to keep pace with the expansion of the university sector and universities are facing increasing pressure to maintain their infrastructure and resources such as library books (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2004). The effect has been accumulation of high number of people in demand for higher education but can not be admitted due to limited resources. Existing private universities have not altered the situation.

Study Population

The study population consisted of 3500 lecturers (Wekesa, 2007) out of which 690 were involved in DL. They were drawn from 7 public universities.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Out of the 7 universities only 3 universities have established component in DL hence saturated sampling was used to select the 3 universities. Saturated sampling was also used to select Directors, QA unit, CHE; Directors, programme coordinators in the sampled universities. Purposive sampling was used to first select lecturers and students involved in DL then stratified random sampling method was then used to select a sample of 207 lectures and 606 students involved in DL. The sample frame is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sample frame**

Category	Total Population	No. Selected	%
Universities	3	3	100
QA Director, CHE	1	1	100
PCs	3	3	100
Lecturers	690	207	30
Students	2019	606	30

Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was first organized by creating categories and themes pertinent to the study and then reported. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics which involved use of graphs, means and percentages.

12. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

This study was set to identify policy guidelines put in place to ensure quality in DL in Kenyan public universities and examine the extent to which these policy guidelines have been implemented.

Findings in General

From the findings it is clear that there is a lack of coherent policy for distance education at the national level. The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) is the sole accrediting and quality assurance body for higher education and is concerned with accrediting private universities with a focus on residential programmes. There is no written policy and guidelines for distance education. Public universities are responsible for the quality of their own course. The CHE accreditation system seems to be more rigorous than university quality assurance measures and suggest that it should be used for the accreditation of new programmes. However, the public universities seem to adopt CHE standards and guidelines used in both residential and DL programmes.

Basing on the three major questions that guided this study, the findings in the 3 sampled universities namely University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenyatta University (KU) and Moi University (MU) were as follows:

What guidelines and policies are put in place to assure quality in the DL programmes?

According to the findings, the study revealed that the three sampled universities have similar approaches to quality assurance. They have guidelines put in place in

reference to the seven key areas of institutional activities that influence quality in DL as outlines in CHEA (2002). The areas include: Institution mission, Institution structure, institution resources, curriculum and instruction, faculty support, student support and student learning outcome.

Institutions Mission

The investigation on this element indicated that the institutions are driven by clearly stated in their mission statements. It also revealed that the DL programmes have been established in line with the institutions' mission. This was shown by the institutions clearly stating reasons/objectives for starting these programmes.

Institutional Organizational Structure

According to the findings, the institutions have put in place administrative structures that allow DL programmes to be integrated into the institution's administrative structures. For example Moi University constitutes of different schools and directorate. The Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (DODL) are directly in charge of DL programmes. The university has set up Campusus in different parts of the country to facilitate the running of the DL programme. KU is organized into schools, institutes and directorate. The institute of Open and Distance Learning is the one response for DL programmes. Similarly, UoN is organized in form of campuses, colleges and several schools. The College of Education and External Studies is the base and foundation of DL programmes. The university has set up six regional centers in different parts of the country to facilitate the running of DL programmes.

Admission Conditions

The findings revealed that the institutions use similar criteria in admitting learners. They have adopted it from CHE's guidelines for preparing curriculum for an academic programme. Since the programmes offered through DL are same as residential programmes, as indicated by the findings, the same admission requirements are used.

Curriculum and Instruction

An investigation on this element indicated that the programmes offered by the universities through DL environment are same as the residential programmes. The CHE guidelines for preparing curriculum designed for residential programmes have been adopted on this element. The findings indicated that the programmes offered are limited to those subject areas where the institutions have expertise in. The teaching staff has to meet the university expected qualification to teach the subject area. The programmes are to be designed by the university teaching departments and it is up to them to review and update the curriculum often. The main mode of delivery used is print media and occasional face to face.

Institutions Resources

The findings revealed that the financial resource allocation for School of Education and External Studies (UoN), The Institute of ODL (KU) and Directorate of Open and Distance Learning (MU) is administered and governed by the university's financial policy. The findings also revealed that the universities have not yet embraced the use of new technologies e.g use of the internet in delivery.

Faculty Support

The findings indicated that for a lecturer to qualify to teach in a subject area in this program they must first meet the normal university qualifications as set by the CHE standards. DL qualifications are not specified.

Student Support:

The investigation indicated that the main medium of delivery was printed materials. Support services for students are in the form of face to face teaching, audio cassettes, library services and other teaching/ learning media. Support services are administered through regional centres (for UoN and KU) or satellite campuses (for MU).

Student Learning Outcome / Examination

The findings indicated that the common university regulations for residential programmes are applied in processing of the examination. The universities regulations governing both graduate and postgraduate examinations and project assessments apply. For one to be awarded a degree, they must meet the graduation requirements which include among others a minimum number of units of examinable coursework required and a research project (where applicable) must be successfully completed.

To what extent do the DL programmes fulfill the set Quality assurance Policy Guidelines?

One of the objectives of the study was to examine the extent to which the DL programmes fulfill the set QA policy guidelines. According to the findings, the institutions have realized the importance of quality in these programmes, therefore they have put measures here and there as reported, however, they are still falling short of meeting the QA assurance objectives. These has between attributed to challenges faced by most institutions. Basing the analysis on the key elements influencing quality in DL based on the conceptual framework explained earlier (chapter one), the results were as follows:

Institution mission

CHEA (2002) notes that a great influence on quality assurance in DL is having these programmes focus on demonstration of need for a DL offering in relation to institutional mission and limited to subject areas for which the institution has expertise. According to the findings, the institutions have well defined vision, mission statements and core values that serve as there driving force.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the DL programs offered are consistent with the institutions' mission and limited to those subject areas for which the institution has expertise as shown by the lecturers' response in relation to this aspect.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the institutions into colleges or institutes, schools and departments provides for effective planning and evaluation systems and appropriate administration structure that allow the institution to achieve its DL goals. To enable achieve the objectives set; the study revealed that the universities have put in place an administrative office in charge of the DL programmes. The analysis also revealed that the administration of DL is fully integrated into the institutions' regular policies and procedures. However, the analysis revealed that, the way the administration is structured, slows down every process e.g provision of resources, slow payment of lectures hence discouraging lectures leading to inadequate academic staff and fewer departments opting for ODL mode.

This was revealed by the response by lecturers on the question as to whether they were comfortable with the organizational structured in place. 42.0% lecturers disagreed while 40.1% neither disagreed nor agreed that they were comfortable with the organizational structure in place as shown in Figure 2.

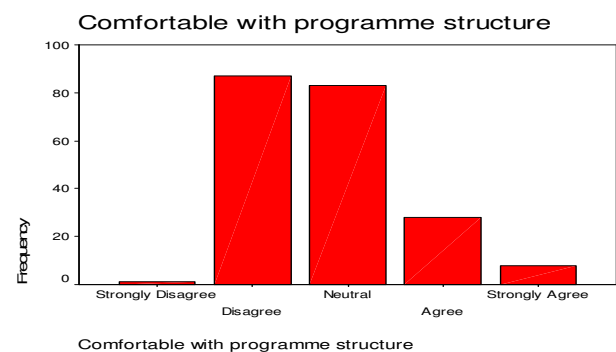


Figure 2: Lecturers' view on organizational structure of the programme

Admission

All the institutions have a well defined policy on the entry requirement/ conditions of admissions for each programme offered as well as the course duration and structure. The study revealed that the universities strictly follow the set conditions on admitting the learners into the programmes.

Institutional Resources

Institutions have budgets and policy statements reflecting their commitments to the students, however according the findings there are still set backs in the area of resources, technology and technical assistance. The study showed that the resources used might be adequate in



reference to the technology used thus the print media but the technology used was neither appropriate nor current. Therefore the resources are inadequate in reference to current technology. This was attributed to the fact that the use of current technology e.g the internet is costly hence

the institutions are using the print media as the main mode of delivery. The lecturers' responses to issues related to institutional resources and technology to support DL are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Lecturers' views on Institutional Resources & Technology to support DL

Areas of Concern	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Adequate Resources & Technology	7.7%	29.5%	39.1%	15.0%	8.7%
Appropriate Technology used	3.9%	12.1%	26.6%	31.4%	26.0%
Current Technology	1.0%	3.9%	26.1%	42.0%	27.0%
Adequate Technical Assistance & Expertise to support electronically delivered programmes	4.8%	10.6%	29.5%	35.3%	19.8%

Curriculum and Instruction

The standards addressing the content of the curriculum, the structure of the credential awarded, and the institution's process for reviewing and updating the curriculum should be addressed. DL programs must be limited to those subject areas for which the parent institution has expertise as outlined by CHEA (2002). According to the finding, this factor has been adhered to well in that the programmes are limited to those subject areas the institutions have expertise in.

Though there was no clear cut on the whether the curriculum content and learning experience were

structured in form appropriate for DL, there was dissatisfaction on the technology used and curriculum review and update. The findings revealed that the technology used was not current and the curriculum was not reviewed and updated often as it should be. The investigation also revealed that, there was limited interaction between instructor and students and among students. This was mainly attributed to the mode of delivery used which is mainly print media. The responses from the lectures on curriculum and instruction issues are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Lecturers' view on Curriculum and Instruction

Areas of concern	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Appropriate mode of delivery	17.4%	30.0%	30.9%	16.4%	5.3%
Appropriate technology used	3.9%	12.1%	26.6%	31.4%	26.0%
Curriculum content and learning experience structured in form appropriate for DL	7.7%	20.8%	43.0%	24.2%	4.3%
Curriculum used often reviewed	2.9%	7.7%	28.5%	49.8%	11.1%
Timely and meaningful interaction between lectures & students, & among students	1.5%	26.0%	45.1%	23.5%	3.9%

Faculty Support

The study revealed that, the faculties have proper academic qualifications in the subject area but majority do

not have proper qualification in use of DL environment. However, the institutions have been organizing for trainings in the use of DL environment. The response on faculty support by lecturers is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Lecturers' view on Faculty Support**

Areas of Concern	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Qualifications & Training in use of DL Environment	5.8%	15.0%	11.1%	38.6%	29.5%
Often trained in use of DL	28.0%	35.3%	17.4%	13.0%	6.3%
Comfortable with Workload handling	0.5%	7.7%	46.4%	41.1%	3.9%

Student Support

Student interaction with faculty and technical support is central to the quality of DL as outlined by CHEA. The study revealed that the main mode of delivery used in these institutions is print media; Support services for students are in the form of face to face teaching, audio

cassettes, library services and other teaching/ learning media. However, this mode doesn't provide timely and meaningful interaction between instructors and students. The study also revealed that there was inadequate technical expertise and assistance to support electronically delivered programmes.

Table 6: Students' view on student support

Area of support	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Appropriate academic support	7.5%	15.0%	42.5%	34.2%	0.8%
Adequate support materials	1.7%	19.8%	38.8%	33.9%	5.8%
Current technology used	0.8%	8.3%	19.0%	56.2%	15.7%
Adequate technical expertise and assistance to support electronically delivered programmes	2.5%	19.2%	38.3%	37.5%	2.5%
There is timely & meaningful interaction between instructors & students	4.1%	12.4%	29.8%	51.2%	2.5%

Student Learning Outcome/ Examination

According to CHEA (2002) institutions require sustaining a comprehensive system for the evaluation of the institution's educational effectiveness in relation to student learning. The findings showed that in the sampled institution, evaluation examination processes applied are similar to campus-based learning because all the programmes offered through DL are also offered on campus.

What are the Challenges encountered in ensuring quality in DL programmes?

The challenges experienced in the findings cuts across the sampled universities. These challenges have greatly hindered the implementation of most of the guideline and policies put in place to assure quality. They include:

- Lack of funds - This is mostly attributed to the government's lack of a DL policy for higher education hence there is no specific provision for DL in the overall national budget
- Inadequate resources – this has in turn hindered the production of high quality distance materials, led to lack of resource centres and inadequate library resources. This has a great impact on the quality of the programmes
- Outdated facilities – most of the programmes mainly use print as the medium of instruction. The institutions have not embraced the current technology yet because of the cost and the complexity associated with it.
- Lack of proper infrastructure and support for DL – this challenge is also attributed to lack of funds, necessary ICT and audio-visual equipment and lack of expertise in producing course materials
- Poor teaching/learning practices – most of the DL programmes have adopted the behavior patterns on traditional education delivery, which is not



appropriate for DL type of education. This is also attributed majority of the staff lack proper training in use of DL environment.

- f) Attitude towards technology enhanced learning – many scholars still do not believe that quality education can be delivered through information technology.
- g) Lack of a clear understanding of DL. Some of the key players in DL do not understand principles and application of ODL. This creates a serious gap in policy planning and implementation.
- h) Administration structure – the way it is structured slows down most processes e.g provision of resources
- i) Inadequately trained support staff
- j) Staff shortage
- k) Lack or inadequate programme review

13. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and discussions, it is apparent that there are several gaps and a number of areas need to be considered by institutions, policy makers and stake holders in DL for future planning to promote quality in distance learning in higher education in Kenya. This section proposes the following relevant recommendations:

Distance Education Policy

From the analysis it is clear that there is lack of coherent policy for distance education at the national level.

- a) The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) is the sole accrediting and quality assurance body for higher education and is concerned with accrediting private universities. Public universities are responsible for the quality of their own course. The CHE accreditation system seems to be more rigorous than university quality assurance measures and suggest that it should be used for the accreditation of new programmes (Teng'o, 2003a).
- b) Commission for Higher Education (CHE) should put in place national and institutional policies and guidelines for the establishment of Distance Education programmes.

Management and Financial Planning of Distance Education Programmes

The organizational structure of the college into schools and departments provides for effective planning and evaluation systems and appropriate administration structure that allow the institution to achieve its DL goals.

The set organizational structure also provides proper integration of the DL programmes into institution's administrative structures as well as its planning and oversight mechanisms. However, the analysis revealed

that there is an absence of coordinated management structures for DE programmes and most of them have been launched with the specific function of generating funds for the university. In some of the institutions, Distance Education programmes are managed just as the regular university programmes. There is therefore the need to:

- a) Establish structures for the management of the various distance education programmes showing distinctions for the different modes of provision.
- b) Carry out cost-analysis of Distance Education programmes with a view to making them cheaper than traditional residential programmes.
- c) Setting and maintaining standards for quality assurance in the various Distance Education programmes.

Programme Design and Development of Materials

It is also evident that in many of the Distance Education programmes in the country, only a few of them adopted Distance Education modes of delivery largely and use current technology. This is as a result of serious lack of professional staff development for DL. There is a need therefore for:

- a) Institutional based staff development for DL programmes.
- b) Development of curricula especially suited for DL.
- c) Developing interactive learning methods and materials.
- d) Identifying cost-effective media and technologies for use in DL programmes.
- e) Applying the most appropriate media and technologies to support learning outcomes.

Learner Support System in Distance Education Programmes

In DL environment, learners require effective counseling support system to reduce attrition rates. Though University of Nairobi seems to work on this aspect, there's still more to be done. Therefore it is recommended that policy analysis research to be undertaken by experts so as to identify the ideal policy guidelines and learner support systems that can apply in Kenya.

Training Needs for Capacity Building

There's need for developing intervention strategies to build capacities for decision-makers (who in most cases are involved in policy making), institutional capacities and individual capacity building.



Appreciating and Embracing Modern Technology

It is a big challenge for stake holders and decision makers to appreciate that effective distance education can be delivered via modern technologies. The Internet forms technological breakthrough in DL tools. Therefore, advances in the Internet concerning access and quality of information are fundamental for making distance education efficient and effective as an innovation in higher education in Kenya. For technology enhanced distance education to succeed in Kenya, Government, Universities, Industries and NGO's all have a role to play as stakeholders (Juma, 2004). This study recommends that the stakeholders encourage more people to improve their academic work through distance education, because students are free to wherever, whenever and however they like. Distance education is economical and flexible and of good quality just as in regular education set up.

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