



## **Utilization of Open and Distance Education for Human Capital Development in Rivers State**

<sup>1</sup>Visigah, Dumadi Livinus & <sup>2</sup>Chuku Christiana Uloaku

**Department of Educational Foundations  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
<sup>1</sup>[visigahdumadi@gmail.com](mailto:visigahdumadi@gmail.com) & <sup>2</sup>[christychuku@yahoo.com](mailto:christychuku@yahoo.com)**

### **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to determine the utilization of open and distance education for human capital development in Rivers State. Open and distance education programmes constitute different programmes to enhance human capital development. Two research questions were used to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 2,829 while the sample size is 283 respondents (10% of the population size) using a stratified random sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using Utilization of Open and Distance Education in Human Capital Development Questionnaire (UODEHCDQ). The pilot study of 10 to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.74 was established. Findings showed that intellectual capacity building; learners to be worthy in learning and character; provision of effective, qualified and certified facilitators to coordinate and administer academic and administrative task effectively foster distance teaching and learning activities. It was recommended that sound board members should be set void of any influence but meritocracy, experience, etc; adequate instructional facilities for effective teaching and learning should be provided by the Government and distance education curriculum planners should map ways for literacy, human capital development, problem solving, discipline oriented.

**Keywords:** Open and Distance Education, Human Capital Development, Managerial Effectiveness, Enhancement of Literacy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Open and distance learning (ODL) is a formative education strategy which is used to solve the problems of over- growing number of citizens who need higher education. It serves as a bridge for the educationally disadvantaged members of the society. Open and distance learning refers to educational patterns, approaches and strategies that permit people to learn with no barriers in respect of time and space, age, and previous educational qualification - no entry qualification, no age limit, no regard to sex, race, tribe and state of origin (Alaezi, 2015). It means an irreplaceable key to understanding our world ourselves, to anticipate the future and to husband our national environment for the development benefits of all human beings. Alaezi (2015) opined that it is an ethic that abhors the present imbalances in the basic human development or conditions, as imbalances in access to health care, nutrition diet, shelter, and education. Open and distance learning as an independent study as a way of liberating the students from the fetters of school and college routine; in 2015, Daddos said it is a special form or utilization of education in which;

- i. Teacher and students work apart from each other i.e. at a distance
- ii. Teachers and students do not communicate eye - ball - to - eye ball with each other.
- iii. Printed materials are exchanged with the aid of a mailing system.
- iv. Learning usually takes place in the students' home.
- v. Teaching and learning process assumes the form of self-study but guided by the facilitator.
- vi. Learning and teaching process allows a degree of openness with regards to access, age, goals, methods, duration, location etc.

- vii. The student does not cease to work for living as it is a study alongside work.
- viii. Open and distance learning accommodates diverse learning styles. It meets the specific and special educational need of variety of learners.

Many countries of the world today need educational system capable of competently handling very large student bodies to the tune of 100,000 or more students at a time. Recent developments in science and technology which resulted in improved health care delivery systems have made population explosion in both developed and even developing nations inevitable and there is urgent need for expansion of educational facilities to accommodate those desiring education at all levels. Governments no longer have enough money to build and maintain buildings for very large number of students annually (Daddos, 2015). The answer must, therefore, come from distance education which denotes the system of education in which teaching-learning transaction proceed at a distance, or in which the teacher and the taught are not always in physical contact.

Port way and Lane cited in Wolf (2010) refer to distance education as teaching and learning situations in which the Instructor and the learner or learners are geographically separated, and therefore, rely on electronic devices and print media for instructional delivery. The early discovery of writing enabled print media as vehicles of correspondence education to come into focus long before the ear of telecommunications industry for production and implementation of electronic devices in distance education. Distance education therefore is said to be achieved through two vehicles namely: correspondence lesson and electronic devices.

Fabunmi (2014) clearly stated that education has modern means of imparting knowledge and skills to students. For example, multi - media, internet, and televisions etc enhanced access to qualitative education. This method allows the student enough time to cater for his socio economic demands - without interrupting his studies. Features of Open and distance learning enhanced access and balanced development. Access is defined as a way or right approach or entry (Chamber Universal Learners Dictionary, 2004), Open and distance learning has many characteristics which have given it the value for increased educational access or right approach required for balanced developments. Daddos (2015) stated these access or characteristics:

- i. Open and distance learning accommodates
- ii. Openness of entry, time and space
- iii. Massification of education
- iv. Quality in teaching and learning
- v. Flexibility in the use of multi - media
- vi. Innovation of curricular
- vii. Technology for learning and research
- viii. Keeping the human face and opportunities for many.

There are other enhanced accesses to qualitative education through distance learning for balanced capital development. FRN (2014) and Alaezi (2015) listed the following:

- a. Allowance for open and flexible entry requirements to increased access and equity.
- b. Degrees, diplomas and certificates are awarded by cumulative credits to give learners time to attend to their personal - social commitments.
- c. Courses are organized and prepared by specially designated course coordinators and programmes leaders including a variety of local and international experts to provide up - to date and latest information of easy access, group, retention and retrieval.
- d. Programmes are made available to learners at their chosen places, homes, school or work places - to be completed at the students own time and pace and at affordable costs. Balanced development is an economy based on effective and efficient production. In other words, manpower is developed for effective and efficient production in his work place.
- e. Alleviation of capacity for constraints for economic, human resources and rural development.

Iromantu (2013) reaffirmed that capacity building for human resource development promotes education for all (knowledge-based society) especially the reduction or totally eliminate illiteracy and poverty. The avenue for transforming our higher education sectors to make our institutions respond to contemporary

changes, development and needs in general is a good way forward, providing solution to the perennial problems of teacher education; appreciating, educating the citizens about, and using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to accelerate national, state and community development and provide an organized entry into the global information super highway (Babalola, 2017).

Generating spin off effects on other sectors of national development such as raising development in telecommunications, information industry, technology broadcasting, postal and information and the development of many educationally related small scale industries. In a nutshell, Open and distance learning is a tool that can enhance education, as a form of human capital development and satisfy the exceptionally large demand for education because of the huge and rapidly expanding population which is still mainly rural, remote, under-represented and marginalized. Open and distance learning education may be the only way in general to provide access for all and achieve equitable representation and balanced by taking the distance or difficulties out of education.

### **Managerial Effectiveness**

The following have been identified as human capital development strategies for the sustenance of the open distance education system in Rivers State: Kanfman, Walkins and Guerra (2010) stressed that effective education entails the promotion of equitable lifelong learning opportunities to see that major progress is made for education access, specifically at the primary school level, for both boys and girls. However, access does not always mean quality of education; or completion of primary school. Currently, many youths worldwide still lack basic literacy skills and that is why the sustainable development goals for education stated that by 2030 all girls and boys complete true, equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

This is in tandem with the concept of sustainable development as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Jegede (2013) said it is a planned positive change, lasting progress and literally generated growth overtime according to a set of prescribed economic, democratic and other indices that clearly manifest in better quality of life for all. It is that which is enduring, in this sense, it is beneficial to the present while paving the way for future benefits without adverse repercussion to the beneficiaries. A good quality education is one that provides all learners with capacities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (Liaw and Huang, 2011). The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy, basic scientific knowledge and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease.

Capacity development to improve the quality of teachers and other education stakeholders is of crucial importance in the process. It is believed that education leads to empowerment; is a process of strengthening individuals, organizations and communities so that they get more control over their own situations and environments. Managerial effectiveness turns in quality education as a crucial factor in combating poverty and inequality in society (Jegede, 2013). Six dimensions to quality distance education by the National Open and Distance Learning Programme (2012) are:

- a. Equity - This refers to non-discrimination and equity, equity in education means that personal and social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills.
- b. Contextualization and Relevance - Quality distance education cannot be based on a blue print that is applicable in all situations. Solutions and adaptations of education systems must be based on the real needs of a country and /or community.
- c. Adults Friendly Teaching and Learning - Quality distance education puts the child in the centre and helps to reach his or her full potentialities, hence fostering quality education requires children's active participation.
- d. Sustainability - Educational change processes often need time to be realized.

- e. Balanced Approach - Quality distance education aims at developing a balanced set of capacities of children which they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.
- f. Learning Outcomes - After completing a certain level of education, children must have developed a minimum standard of skills. Quality distance education requires a result oriented approach.

To meet the numerous challenges facing how to sustain quality distance education and human capital development in Rivers State, Nigeria, Huang (2010) said it requires an in-depth training, re-training and better education of the citizens of our nation that is regarded as the giant of Africa. Meanwhile, according to Liaw and Huang (2011), Rivers State as a component State and Nigeria by extension is finding it difficult to harness its natural resources because it has not been able to appropriately utilize education as a tool for human capital development as a result of the following cankerworms in the education system:

- i. Poor funding of schools
- ii. Poor facilities
- iii. Emphasis on paper qualification
- iv. Brain drain syndrome
- v. Inadequate curricula
- vi. Poor motivation of the work force
- vii. Poor quality teaching force

One is inclined to say that the aim of distance learning in Rivers State - Nigeria is partly a fore-runner to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in relation to education which are to reducing school drop-out rate and improving relevance, quality and efficiency and acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and values for lifelong education and useful living (National Open and Distance Learning Programme, 2012).

### **Enhancement of Literacy**

The concept of human capital is associated with intellectual capacity which flows of knowledge in an individual and can be regarded as the tangible and intangible resources associated with people. Literacy has become one of the front burning issues in Nigeria today because for this State to cope with the current global and natural developmental goals, it means that the nation's professionals must be adequately trained because literacy input in both industries and society cannot be overemphasized. Labour is often talked about as a uniform, well understood input into production. According to Babalola (2017), literacy has several aspects; this involves improvement of knowledge for effective representation, societal growth, knowledge of the dos and don'ts in the society, sound security, health and longevity of the population.

Literacy helps to reduce illness, accidents, thuggery, hate, evil, backwardness, darkness and insecurity and increase productivity; this is in line with one of the sustainable development goals. A study conducted by Liaw and Huang (2011) on the relationship between human capital and economic growth showed that human capital development which connotes employees literacy was very important and needs to be properly addressed by countries that want to keep abreast with global challenges especially in the education sector because it is the only concept that sustains the education system.

The relationship between education and human development is no longer in question because Jegede (2014) stated that the main link between distance education and economic development are the domains literacy, knowledge and skills it produces in the labour force. Greater assets for nation building are human resources. Obviously, distance education empowers main generic terms to understand himself, how his body functions and his relationship with his environment. It empowers man economically, morally and socially, it offers him more opportunities for self-actualization and makes him know his right and privileges. In view of Babalola (2017), an educated man has greater occupational mobility many have argued that without a well-trained, well developed, well appreciated, and well managed human resources, most countries cannot meet the challenges of change, growth and technological advancement in the globe. It is quality education that helps a human being to derive knowledge from networks which adds to improve man's relationships within and outside the education system. This concept of social life in the

distance education system has been defined by Huang (2011) as the feature of life - networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.

In the words of a renowned Chinese Human Resource expert and reformer, Khatiwada cited by Daddos (2015), if you wish to plan for a year, sow a seed, if you wish to plan for ten years, plant trees! If you wish to plan for a life time, develop man. Hence, education plays an important role in developing and sustaining the future of this, in other words, we still maintain that sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; it is therefore believed that education is an engine of growth of any nation. He further posited that it is only quality and functional education system that is necessary in this present dispensation that can improve the production capacity of a nation's work force.

The type of education that is tagged "functional" today goes beyond the traditional goal of literacy and numeracy. It is the type of education that is able to liberate, stimulate and inform the individual and teaches him how to live right in the work force. This fact is further buttressed by Wolf (2010) when he noted that education has proven to be the single and most potent factor for social development and transformation. Quality distance education that will foster high human capital value and sustainable development requires a curricular which addresses the challenges of the sustainable development goals in the education sector in Nigeria and focuses attention on practical skills, knowledge and competencies which help to actualize the growth of the nation.

In a view by Imhabekhai (2014), quality education and human capital development produce trained entrepreneurs that can practically harness the natural resources that will propel our nation to a greater advancement in technology. All these can only be achieved by attracting employees with good formal education to reduce costs in training and retraining employees to increase their performance on their jobs.

In a bid to stimulate growth in education, Rivers State has established Universities. Willis (2009) expressed that this is a welcome development in terms of enhanced access to qualitative education for balanced development. But on realization that the establishment of these universities meant adding to the State Polytechnic, Higher Teachers Training Colleges (ENS) of education and professional schools, one begins to wonder how possible these universities can provide access to the optimum population (i.e. workforce) of about 27,000 people who may need access to higher institutions.

This is more so when one examines the manpower development in the under developed and State with a population of 14 million people, educationally disadvantaged. This may be due to the inadequate number of higher institutions in the country. Open and distance education should be a welcome tool for educational programme in the State; it seems to provide enhanced access to qualitative education in some fields that require human capital development for job enrichment and other sectors in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The growing population needs effective open and distance education enhanced access to qualitative education as a tool to balanced development in Rivers State. The problem(s) envisaged may be due to the poor educational attainment of the members of the society and perhaps due to the backwardness of the State educationally and in the face of advanced contemporary society in global economy.

This may be due to the inadequate number of higher institutions; enhanced access to qualitative education which brings a balanced development and job enrichment. This may be the concern of Open and distance education and contemporary higher institutions for manpower development as to increase the number of professionals in all facets of economic development.

Teachers, Nurses, Accountants, Bankers, Economists, Engineers, Politicians and Businessmen to mention but a few need access to qualitative education for balanced development. Self-employed individuals and staff in offices need development so as to be professionally increased in productivity. The few higher institutions in Rivers State cannot absorb those qualified or yearning for qualitative education including the teeming population of secondary leavers who are qualified for admission but do not have access for qualitative education for one reason or another (National Open and Distance Learning Programme, 2012). Qualitative education means producing professionals, staff development for professionalism, technicians and lawyers to fit in the current call for science and technology in a competitive global economy. The

pertinent question hitherto is “can Open and distance education as a tool for education programmes fulfill the needs of human capital development in Rivers State? This, the study seeks to answer.

**Purpose (Objectives) of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the utilization of open and distance education for human capital development in Rivers State.

The objectives of the study are specifically to:

1. Ascertain ways managerial effectiveness of open and distance education influences human capital development in Rivers State.
2. Find out ways open and distance education enhances literacy development in Rivers State.

**Research Questions**

The following are the research questions proposed for the study.

1. What are the ways managerial effectiveness of open distance education influences human capital development in Rivers State?
2. What are the ways open and distance education enhances literacy development in Rivers State?

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 2,829 (twenty-nine (29) Facilitators and two thousand and eight hundred-2,800) distance learners at National Open University of Nigeria Rivers State Centre. The sample size consisted of 283 (10% of the population size) while the stratified random sampling technique was adopted. The instrument used for data collection is titled “Utilization of Open Distance Education in Human Capital Development (UODEHCD)”. The questionnaire comprised two sections: section A and section B respectively. Section A elicited information on the personal data of the respondents while Section B with ten (10) items that provided relevant information with respect to the two (2) research questions. The questionnaire items was designed on a four-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA) rated 4-points, Agree (A) Rated 3-Points, Disagree (DA) Rated 2-Points and Strongly Disagree (SD) Rated 1- Point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face a content validity by two experts in measurement and evaluation. The collection of their responses was made; thereafter, a pilot study of 10 respondents to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.74 was established.

Data collected from the respondents was statistically analyzed using the mean and rank order statistics to answer the research questions.

**RESULTS**

Research Question 1: *What are the ways managerial effectiveness of open distance education influences human capital development in Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Mean scores of respondents on how managerial effectiveness influences human capital development.**

S/NO	ITEMS	Mean	Ranks	Remarks
1.	It facilitates the intellectual capacity building for distance learners	2.81	4 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
2.	To graduate distance learners to be worthy in learning and character at the appropriate time	3.04	1 <sup>st</sup>	Accepted
3.	Provision of effective, qualified and certified facilitators to educate distance learners	2.86	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accepted
4.	An ineffective distance management board to administer academic and administrative task	2.15	5 <sup>th</sup>	Rejected
5.	Effective management disciplined board to coordinate all resources to foster distance teaching and learning	2.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.74</b>		

**Field data, 2019**

Table 1 showed how distance education facilitates intellectual capacity; cultured learners to be worthy in learning and character; how important is an effective, qualified and certified facilitators and the board to coordinate all resources with corresponding accepted mean value of 2.81, 3.04, 2.86 and 2.84 respectively positively influences human capital development in distance education. However, an ineffective distance management board to administer academic and administrative task serves as a setback to goal achievement, hence rejected mean value of 2.15.

Research Question 2: *What are the ways open and distance education enhances literacy development in Rivers State?*

**Table 2: Mean scores of respondents on how open and distance education enhances literacy development.**

S/NO.	ITEMS	Mean	Ranks	Remarks
6.	Through distance teaching and learning	3.01	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accepted
7.	Through effective distance education with respect to the laws that govern the society	2.58	4 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
8.	It makes distance learners to be literate, self-reliance, gain consciousness and discover oneself	3.14	1 <sup>st</sup>	Accepted
9.	Literacy is a tool to self-control and enlightenment	2.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Accepted
10.	Distance education has limit to literacy society	2.00	5 <sup>th</sup>	Rejected
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.71</b>		

**Field data, 2019**

Table 2 showed how open and distance education enhances literacy development in the following ways: through teaching and learning; societal literacy promotes law abiding; self-reliance, gain consciousness and discover oneself; a tool to self-control and enlightenment with 3.01, 2.58, 3.14 and 2.84 respectively for the mean scores accepted. Whereas, the opinion of the respondents that distance education has limit to literacy society was rejected resulting to the mean value of 2.00, implied that distance education has the potency to pull citizens from dark ignorance of illiteracy.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study revealed that the facilitation of intellectual capacity building couple with learners to be worthy in learning and character and the provision of effective, qualified and certified facilitators to educate distance learners with effective distance management board to coordinate and administer academic and administrative task effectively foster distance teaching and learning activities have a huge impacts on human capital development of the citizen (Jegade, 2013).

On the other hand, distance teaching and learning help with respect to norms, values, and laws etc, which govern the society towards self-reliance, gain consciousness, self-control and enlightenment that does not have limit to literate society for development to drives. In a view by Imhabekhai (2014), there is no lasting development with societal literacy.

**CONCLUSION**

From the findings, it was concluded that managerial effectiveness of open and distance education enhanced literacy development of learners’ human capital development in Rivers State.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were derived from the study;

1. Sound board members should be set void of any influence but the yardstick as follows; proficiency, certification, effectiveness, meritocracy, experience, corrupt-free, possessing scientific managerial skills, etc. that can monitor distance teaching and learning.
2. Government should take appropriate steps to make provision for adequate instructional facilities for effective teaching and learning.

3. Distance education curriculum planning should be mapped in a way that literacy, human capital developmental, societal problem-solving, industrial, positive and discipline-oriented to proffer solution to numerous societal issues by curriculum planners.

## REFERENCES

- Alaezi, O. A. (2005). National Open University Plan; Enhancing Higher Education in Nigeria through Open Distance Learning Delivery System. Lagos; NOUN.
- Babalola, J. O. (2017). Reinventing Nigerian Higher Education for Youth Employment in a Competitive Global Economy. Jerry Commercial Production, Calabar.
- Chamber Universal Learners Dictionary (2004). Bershire, Cox and Way Man LTD.
- Doddos, A. (2015). Open University Life — long Learning Delivery System. Lagos: NOUN.
- Fabunmi, F. A. (2014). The Role of Information and Information Technology in Distance and Open Learning Education. Alpha Press. Oyo State.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National Policy on Education. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Huang, H. (2010). Instructional Technologies Facilitating on-line Courses. Education Technology, Rivers State: NOUN.
- Imhabekhai, C. I. (2014). National Open University of Nigeria: A Wasteful or Worthwhile opportunity. Retrieved July, 2018 from: [www.google.org](http://www.google.org)
- Iromantu, O. C. (2013). Integration of ICT in Education. The Status, Issues, Challenges and Infrastructure. Paper presented at the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) sub-regional conference on Integration of ICT in Education for West Africa: Issues and Challenges, held in Abuja, Nigeria.
- Jegede, O. (2013). Taking the Distance out of Higher Education in 21st Century Nigeria: Art invited Convocation Lecture Presented at the Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State.
- Jegede, O. (2014). Formulating Viable National and Regional Informational communication Technologies and Open and Distance Learning Policies: An invited Keynote presented at the sub — Regional Ministerial Conference on Integration of ICT in Education: Abuja.
- Kaufman, R.; Watkins, R. & Guerra, I. (2010). The future of distance learning: Defining and sustaining useful results. *Education Technology*, 41, (3), 19 — 26.
- Liaw, S. & Huang, H. (2011). Enhancing Interactivity in Web-based Instruction. A Review of literature. *Journal of Education Technology*, 40 (3), 41 — 45.
- National Open and Distance Learning Programme (2012). Open and distance learning begins. *Nigerian Tribune*, pp. 15—180.
- Willis, B. (2009). Effective distance education planning: lessons learned. *Journal of Education Technology*, 38 (1), 57-59.
- Wolf, H. C. (2010). Distance education. *International Encyclopaedia of Education Technology* (2nd Edition) (pp. 370 — 377). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.