

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Higher education for all in need through the National Open University of Nigeria: A paradox in policy practice

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## Abstract

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This investigation adopted Program Theory-Based Evaluation Design in assessing the merit and worth of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), strictly in line with the institution's mission statement, goal, and policy of "higher education for all in need"; to ascertain access to, and the degree of equilibrium in the demand and supply of higher education in Nigeria. Results revealed that of the total number of candidates applying for higher education admission in Nigeria, between 2003 and 2012, only 13.12% to 26.52% succeeded into Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education; denying 73.48% to 86.88% of candidates who seek access to higher education. It was low access to higher education in the country that necessitated establishment of the NOUN in 1983 to ensure equity and equality of opportunities and wider access to education with a view to mopping up all who need higher education but are left out by the conventional education system. Results further showed that the government's policy of "higher education for all in need through the NOUN" is merely a paradox in policy practice; because in its present state, NOUN has not and can never cope with the demand for higher education in Nigeria as it only admitted 0.03% to 1.89% of the candidates seeking higher education between 2003 and 2012. It was suggested that improved power supply and internet connectivity, more study centres especially in the rural areas, increased funding of NOUN, and the establishment of a National Open and Distance Education Commission for effective and efficient supervision of NOUN, will make the National Open University of Nigeria the "Higher Education Messiah" that it was intended to be.

**Keywords:** Higher education for all in need; Program theory-based evaluation design; Paradox in policy practice; Open and Distance Education; Access to higher education; National Open University of Nigeria; Higher education.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is all efforts, conscious and direct, incidental and indirect, made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of the individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based (Fafuwa, 2003). Education improves productivity, empowerment and

health, but reduces negative features of life such as child labour, prostitution, crime and other vices. UNESCO (2002) averred that education opens the door for all citizens to participate in development activities and when citizens are denied education, they are excluded from the development process, which in turn puts them at a

disadvantage vis-à-vis their compatriots with the benefit of education. This is why there has been a lot of emphasis, particularly in recent times, for all citizens of the world to have access to basic education of good quality. Education in Nigeria is directed towards self-realization; better human relationship; individual and national efficiency; effective citizenship; national consciousness; national unity; and social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

Education is one of the basic means of human and cultural self-realization as well as a means of realizing the productive power of a nation. The very concept of development implies the constant improvement in the quality of life in a nation through the improvement of the productive capabilities of individuals. Education is a decisive tool for achieving the promotion of socio-economic, political and cultural development of individuals. According to Taiwo (2012), education is a life-long process that has interpretation in purpose, type and level. It is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as for the modification of same in conformity with emerging ideologies, expansions and reformations.

Kpolovie (2002) asseverated that education in Nigeria is for the attainment of the nation's national goals through the production of enlightened citizenry that is equipped with knowledge, abilities, skills, competence, right attitude, values and morals. In other words, it is for the production of the educated man; one who shows evidence of a well-integrated personality or who is fully developed as a person and in relation to other members of the society; an individual who is economically efficient, socially and politically competent, morally acceptable, scientifically oriented, technologically adept, and intellectually cum culturally sophisticated. It is for this purpose that the major function of each school administrator is adequate collection and effective management of data (all necessary information) for accurate planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, staffing, admitting, and evaluating in order to attain the much desired national educational goals of:

- a) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- d) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of moral, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) laid emphasis on the importance and linkage of

education to the development of any society when it highlighted that education satisfies a basic human need for knowledge, provides a means of helping to meet other needs, and helps sustain and accelerate overall development. Another important role of education lies in the fact that it helps to determine the distribution of employment and income for both present and future generations, and education influences social welfare through its indirect effects on health, fertility and life expectancy.

### Higher education

Higher education is study beyond the level of secondary education. It is a study at the end of which a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded. Institutions of higher learning include universities, colleges, polytechnics, professional schools in such fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, art, etc. Benefits of higher education include, among others, higher earning potential; lower blood pressure and stress; healthier lifestyle choices; employer-provided health care coverage; job satisfaction; job stability; and future children benefits. According to Okebukola (2008), higher education provides high level human resources for driving the economy and ensuring rapid societal transformation. That is, the greater the opportunity given to the citizenry for higher education, the more expansive the horizon for rapid social and economic development. In other words, higher education is a panacea to the ills of a society; and how much a nation progresses is a function of the quality of the educational attainment of its citizens. This implies that the higher the level of educational attainment, the more progressive a nation. This is why Nigeria must build and maintain good schools, and treat education as an elixir that has the capability of curing the ills of the Nigerian nation (Kpolovie and Obilor, 2013).

However, records abound that only about 15% of demands for higher education is met in Nigeria (Jegade, 2004) in spite of all the benefits higher education portends. To manage this apparent inadequacy, the Federal Government in 1983 enacted an act establishing the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), an Open and Distance Education institution, to meet the yearnings of numerous Nigerians for higher education. Specifically, the vision, mission, and goal of NOUN as well as the policy establishing it; is to guarantee quality "higher education for all in need" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1980).

### Open and distance education

The most outstanding purpose of Open and Distance Education, more frequently referred to as Open and

**Table 1.** Distance education initiatives in Nigeria

Type	Institution	Year
1 Correspondence Courses	University of London	1947
2 Extra mural Studies	Oxford University	1950
3 DE course by Radio	Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)	1960
4 Educational Television Programmes	National Television of Nigeria (NTV)	1966
5 University of the Air	Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)	1972
6 Teachers In-service Education Programme (TISEP)	Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)	1974
7 Correspondence and Open University unit (COSU) (later COSIT, DLI)	University of Lagos (Nigeria)	1975
8 Teachers' Training Programme	National Teachers' Institute (NTI)	1976
9 Open Learning	National Open University	1983
10 Centre for Distance Learning (CDL)	University of Abuja	1990

**Source:** Nigerian Open University: The Metamorphosis of the Nigerian Satellite Education Programme (Bande, 2003)

Distance Learning (ODL), is that it increases access to higher education by non-traditional means. Access implies the facilitation of people to get opportunity for enrolment into appropriate educational programmes, as well as sustained encouragement of learners to complete such programmes irrespective of their location and nature of job. Open education enhances the provision of literacy, numeracy, technical and vocation skills in a flexible, largely-free and learner friendly manner. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) represents approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners at different levels of education (UNESCO, 2002).

According to Ajadi, Salawa and Adeoye (2008), distance education is an educational system that is characterized by physical separation between the teacher and the learner in which instruction is delivered through a variety of media. This implies that distance education is provided by a mode other than the conventional face-to-face method whose goals are similar to and just as noble and practical as those of on-campus full time face-to-face education.

In this light therefore, the presence of distance education has been in Nigeria since the 1880's when according to Omolewa (1982), notable Nigerians, enrolled in the University of London Examination as external students studying through correspondence without enjoying any formal ties to any conventional

institution. The next phase of distance learning in Nigeria was when the premier University in the country, the University College, Ibadan, demonstrated an interest in the extramural studies of the Oxford University within the first few years of its existence. By 1949, it took over the extramural work of Oxford University which commenced distance learning in Nigeria in 1947. The reports of Jegede (2002), UNESCO (2001), and Fagbamiye (2000) agree on the sequence of listing of the distance education initiatives in Nigeria as reproduced in Table 1 above:

There have been three dominant forces in the growth of open and distance learning in Nigeria. According to Okebukola (2008), the thirst for education by Nigerians has been the first and key driver. He emphasized that between 1950 and 1964, Nigeria had the highest enrolment in Wosley Hall and Rapid Results Correspondence Colleges within the British colonial territories. Okebukola further stated that between 2000 and 2012, the number of applicants for secondary and tertiary education witnessed the highest growth in Africa. A clear example in Nigeria alone is the 1.4 million applicants to the 124 universities in 2012, more than the combined enrolments in South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania (Okebukola, 2008). The second driver is technology. Mobile technologies and the Internet have hiked access to open and distance education resources. The third force in the growth of open and distance education in Nigeria is cross-border higher education (Okebukola, 2008).

### **The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) – An open and distance education institution**

The year 1983, the effective year that the Open University Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1980) came into effect, marked a major turning point in the history of Open and Distance Education (ODE) in Nigeria. From this date onwards, the educational history of Nigeria, in her strive to achieve Education for All (EFA) Nigerians, received a surge. Various statistics indicate that majority of Nigerians are yet to have access to education, particularly higher education - the low socioeconomic class, marginalised illiterate women, and those living in remote areas of the country (Jegede 2003). With a view to addressing the continued increase in the population of Nigerians demanding university education, the National Open University of Nigeria was established to ensure “higher education for all in need” via:

- Equity and equality of opportunities in education but specifically in university education.
- Wider access to education generally but specifically university education.

According to Jegede (2004), only 15% of qualified students gain admission into the regular universities in Nigeria. The implication is that there are significantly much more university applicants who are unabsorbed than those admitted by the universities, colleges of education and polytechnics into their conventional programmes.

### **Statement of problem and research questions**

Specifically, the problem of this study is ascertainment of the merit and worth of the National Open University of Nigeria in fulfilling its sole mission of guaranteeing and actually providing higher education for all in need. In other words, the problem that this study is aimed directly at resolving is whether the mission, goal and policy of the National Open University of Nigeria to provide “higher education for all in need” is actually being accomplished by the NOUN or is it a mere paradox in policy practice? In order to solve the identified problem, three research questions are posed as follows:

1. To what extent has the National Open University of Nigeria mopped up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional universities, polytechnics and colleges of education?
2. Will the National Open University of Nigeria ever mop up the excess candidates, and when?
3. Is the National Open University of Nigeria the “Higher Education Messiah” that it is purported to be or are to expect another?

### **METHOD**

This investigation employed Program Theory-Based Eva-

luation Design (PT-BED) which is a suitable approach for assessment of a program strictly in line with its theorized characteristics by clearly ascertaining whether the program is theoretically sound, is operating in direct accordance with the appropriate theory, is producing the expected outcomes, the hypothesized causal linkages are confirmed, modifications are needed, the program is truly worthy of continuation, and the program features are essential for successful replication elsewhere. The design is adopted mainly for determination of the extent to which the program is succeeding or failing, and to provide direction for improvement of the program (Kpolovie, 2012). PT-BED, also called a logic model or impact pathway (Miller and Salkind, 2002), places emphasis on detailing the assumptions on which a program is based (intervention logic) and tracking progress in regard to those steps to see if they are occurring (Brickmayer and Weiss, 2000). The design is analytically and empirically powerful in generating better evaluation questions, better evaluation answers, and better programs. Generally, virtually every other evaluation design is implicitly based on a variety of theories about knowledge construction and or reconstruction for better decisions making with regards to the program under investigation. What makes program theory-based evaluation design to be distinctly unique from all others is that it focuses on a particular theory about the program under study, and explicitly states the specific mechanisms of the program that are indispensably necessary for the program to attain all its intended outcomes, when meticulously implemented accordingly (Stufflebeam, 2005). The National Open University of Nigeria program was established for and on the sole principle or theory of providing higher education for all who need but are not admitted by the conventional higher education programs in Nigeria. It is this sole vision of ‘higher education for all in need’ that this study evaluated to determine the extent to which the goal has been actualized.

Program theory-based evaluation design mainly uses an explicitly developed program model that clearly spells out goal-oriented mechanisms for summative, formative and monitoring purposes (Bickman, 1990; 1996). In this study, the design was adopted for summative evaluation of NOUN because the concern was to ascertain whether the program under study actually produced the intended results in accordance with the underlying theory of the program as specified by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1980) and stated in Bandele (2003) for making of decisions about whether the program should be continued, terminated, or replicated. The design is able to indicate units of the program that are essential for successful replications of the program in other similar situations. When the program did not attain its intended outcomes, program theory-based evaluation design is able to show “whether this is due to implementation failure (the program wasn’t implemented as intended, which might, in itself, explain the lack of outcomes);

unsuitable context (the program was implemented in a context in which the necessary mechanisms did not operate); and theory failure (the program was implemented as intended, in a suitable context and evaluated with a powerful design and measures which would probably have detected important effects if they had been present)" (Rogers, 2002). The program theory in this study was built to meet the requirements of 'black box evaluation', which "focuses on the actual outcomes of a program, without investigating the processes within the program which led to those outcomes" (Rogers, 2002).

Data from 2002 to 2012 for this investigation were obtained from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) that conducts the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination for admission of candidates into both the conventional tertiary institutions of learning (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) and the nonconventional university (NOUN), and from the National Open University of Nigeria with highly valid and reliable Data-Collection Forms that were developed by the researchers. For the purpose of simply answering the research questions, percentages were used as the statistical technique for analysis.

Census sampling method that directly investigates the totality of the population was used to study the entire candidates who have manifested their need for gaining access to higher education by writing the UTME from 2003 to 2012 in Nigeria. The total population of candidates for this investigation and which constitute the study sample is eleven million, nine hundred and ten thousand, nine hundred and twenty-six (11,910,926).

## RESULTS

Results of the data collected over the ten years (2003 to 2012) and analyzed are synoptically presented in Table 2 below; and on its basis, the three research questions are answered.

Table 2 reveals a constantly high rate of unsatisfied demand for higher education in Nigeria. Specifically, it is evident that a percentage range of 13.12% to 26.52% of the total number of candidates seeking admission into Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education finally get admitted. This implies that a range of 73.48% to 86.88% of candidates seeking higher education never get admitted into Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education over the years.

Still reviewing *Table 2*, the mop up by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) has been ridiculously poor: 0.47%, 0.00%, 1.11%, 0.00%, 1.89%, 0.03%, 0.33%, 1.48%, 1.62% and 1.84% in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, respectively. This situation leaves a very high percentage of unattended higher education seekers: 78.80% in 2003, 76.94% in 2004, 83.31% in 2005,

86.88% in 2006, 77.49% in 2007, 78.39% in 2008, 77.11% in 2009, 72.00% in 2010, 75.02% in 2011, and 74.25% in 2012.

Generally, of the 11,910,926 candidates who sought for access into higher education in Nigeria from 2003 to 2012; only 1,672,788 (14.04%) was admitted into conventional universities; 880,380 (7.39%) alone was offered admission into polytechnics and colleges of education in the country; and only 110,276 (0.93%) that got admitted into the National Open University of Nigeria. It is very unfortunate that as high as 9,247,482 (77.64%) of candidates who looked for admission into higher education in the nation over the ten years (2003 to 2012) were never admitted. The National Open University of Nigeria that was supposed to guarantee access to higher education for these candidates lived far below the expectation by not being able to absorb them. The situation is unacceptably precarious and insecure as the nation has not made any provision of an intermediate tertiary institution of learning for the 77.64% of candidates who sought for access into higher education but were denied.

With the above rates, the answer to the first research question "To what extent has the National Open University of Nigeria mopped up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education?" is obviously VERY LOW EXTENT. Of the 11,919,926 who had need for higher education, the conventional tertiary learning institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) in the country admitted only 2,553,168 (21.44%) that is significantly low; leaving the remaining 9,357,758 (78.56%) for possible admission by the NOUN. Regrettably, the NOUN admitted just an insignificant number of 110,276 that is 0.93% of the total candidates and 1.18% of the candidates denied admission by the conventional institutions of learning.

With regards to the second research question: 'Will the National Open University of Nigeria ever mop up the excess candidates, and when?'; the obvious answer is that the National Open University of Nigeria can never bridge the huge admission gap in the country. It can never successfully mop up the excess candidates that seek admission into higher institutions of learning in Nigeria but were not admitted by the conventional tertiary learning institutions. For instance, in 2003 while the admission gap was 78.80%, NOUN was only able to admit 0.47%, and in 2012 the National Open University of Nigeria admitted 1.84% with an admission gap of 74.25%. Although there is an increase in the mop up rate by NOUN, the rate of change is grossly insignificant and haphazard to make for effective hopeful prediction of when NOUN will completely mop up the excess candidates. Suffice it to say that the time when the National Open University of Nigeria will mop up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional tertiary institutions in the country is not in view, it must be

**Table 2.** Admission Trend in Higher Education in Nigeria

Year of Exam.	Type of Exam.	Total No. of Candidates that sat for the Exam.	Admission by Universities		Admission by Polytechnics and Colleges of Education		Total Admission by Uni. Poly. and COE	Total Candidates Expected to be Placed by NOUN	Actual Admission by NOUN		Candidates Expected to be Admitted by NOUN but NOT Admitted	
			Number	%	Number	%	%	%	Number	%	Number	%
2003	UTME	824,800	127,786	12.10	91,143	8.63	20.73	79.27	4,942	0.47	832,159	78.80
	MPCE	231,230										
2004	UTME	846,028	147,134	17.39	47,996	5.67	23.06	76.94	-	0.00	650,898	76.94
	MPCE	-										
2005	UTME	841,878	122,491	12.22	33,682	3.36	15.58	84.42	11,140	1.11	835,450	83.31
	MPCE	160,885										
2006	UTME	916,371	114,650	10.73	25,511	2.39	13.12	86.88	-	0.00	928,733	86.88
	MPCE	152,523										
2007	UTME	857,961	135,912	13.39	73,373	7.23	20.62	79.38	19,143	1.89	786,264	77.49
	MPCE	156,731										
2008	UTME	957,165	168,971	13.54	100,351	8.04	21.58	78.42	358	0.03	977,977	78.39
	MPCE	290,492										
2009	UTME	1,122,440	199,110	13.73	128,090	8.83	22.56	77.44	4,821	0.33	1,118,620	77.11
	MPCE	328,201										
2010	UTME	1,327,366	197,057	14.85	155,049	11.68	26.52	73.48	19,705	1.48	955,555	72.00
	MPCE	-										
2011	UTME	1,428,461	225,766	15.80	107,935	7.56	23.36	76.64	23,122	1.62	1,071,638	75.02
	MPCE	-										
2012	UTME	1,468,394	233,911	15.93	117,251	7.98	23.91	76.09	27,045	1.84	1,090,187	74.25
	MPCE	-										
Grand Summary		11,910,926	1,672,788	14.04	880,380	7.39	21.44	78.56	110,276	0.93	9,247,481	77.64

**Source:** Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Bwari, Abuja

stated categorically that it is not impossible.

The answer to the third research question, "Is the National Open University of Nigeria the "Higher Education Messiah" that it is purported to be or are to expect another?" can only be a categorical 'NO'. If all the candidates who seek

admission into higher education in Nigeria are to be admitted, a Two Year College System that will serve as a transitional postsecondary learning institution must be established just as is obtainable in the United States. Thus, the NOUN is not and cannot be the expected "Higher

Education Messiah" that will successfully grant higher education to all who are in need of it. A Two Year College System alone can serve as the answer to the quest for higher education in Nigeria.

In sum, the policy, mission and goal of the Nat-

-ional Open University of Nigeria to ensure "higher education for all in need" is nothing but a paradox in policy practice as the reality on ground in Nigeria is a total contradiction of the noble objective. However, for the fact that derivable from the roles of Open and Distance Learning the world over, and the fact that the mop up rate by NOUN has risen from 0.03% to 1.89% and is still counting; the NOUN program does not need to be terminated. According to Rai, Bajpai and Singh (2008), distance education is now internationally recognized and accepted as an alternative channel for providing broader access to education in a cost-effective manner; wider and diversified curricula; and a means for continuing life-long education. In this light, the National Open University of Nigeria could and should be improved upon with proper funding and closer supervision.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this investigation have provided concrete data-based answers to the key perturbing questions of whether the NOUN has successfully mopped up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional universities, polytechnics and colleges of education; whether the NOUN will ever be able to guarantee 'higher education for all in need' by admitting all the excess candidates who seek admission in the conventional higher educational institutions but are not given; and whether the NOUN is actually the "Higher Education Messiah" that it is purported to be or are we to expect another? The findings corroborate most public opinion that the immediate challenge for the National Open University of Nigeria is provision of access to higher education for learners, and meeting the huge demand for social, career and employment needs amongst Nigerians because "the conventional universities are only able to cope with about 15% of more than 1.5 million qualified applicants for UTME each year" as reported by the national daily (THISDAY, January 27, 2004:6). Further, the 2012 UTME results revealed that only 673,394 (representing 45.86%) passed the University Matriculation Examination (UME) out of a total of 1,468,394 candidates that sat for the examination. Of those that passed, only 351,162 (23.91%) gained admission into the conventional universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. The big question is: What happens to the remaining 1,117,232 candidates, and of course, those that will be ready for higher education in 2013? What of those in full-time and part-time employments that desire higher education for the purposes of knowledge, promotion, job security, job placement, or a voice in the nation's decision making?

When the Federal Government re-launched the National Open University of Nigeria in April 2001, it rekindled the hope of many of its citizens who desired higher education. More than ten years after the re-

launch, however, that hope continues to hang in the balance as the significant majority who need higher education still cannot be admitted by the NOUN. The National Open University of Nigeria came with a lot of promises. It was meant to offer a second chance to those who, for one reason or the other, missed the opportunity of tertiary education the first time. Its unique selling point was the provision of education without barriers and at the student's chosen pace. But from the results, it is obvious that the National Open University of Nigeria has not succeeded in providing the intervention in higher education for all in need. With effect from 2003 when the first admission into NOUN was consummated to the present year (2013), admissions into NOUN have never exceeded 1.89% of those unabsorbed by the conventional Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education; not to talk of numerous others who are in full-time or part-time employment who need higher education. In this light, therefore, the extent (1.89%) to which the National Open University of Nigeria has mopped up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional universities is very low. The time when the National Open University of Nigeria will mop up the candidates unabsorbed by the conventional universities is not in sight; it may even be impossible in several decades to come. For anything much more meaningful to come from the NOUN in the provision of unfettered access to higher education, the federal government must accorded the program (NOUN), the desired attention.

## CONCLUSION

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was established to provide higher education for all those who need it but are not able to access it through the conventional tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. Unfortunately however, the goal has not been achieved and there does not seem to be a time at sight when it will be accomplished. The policy of education for all in need through the National Open University of Nigeria has thus remained a mere paradox in policy practice. Indeed, the National Open University of Nigeria cannot cope with its establishment policy of "higher education for all in need."

It is known the world over that education determines not only earning capacity, but also the very quality of human life (Dike, 2002). Higher education gives one a greater sense of how to reduce risks in life and change one's behaviour for better. Confidence, self-reliance, and adaptability are all hallmarks of advanced education (Davies, 2001). The National Open University of Nigeria, in addition to providing higher education, is expected to achieve the following:

- Raise literacy level of the population incrementally and systematically so that the goals of education for all (EFA) shall be met on schedule.

- Improve the existing teaching force as well as train new teachers through other methods complimentary to current teacher education practices.
- Harness the opportunities of the information age for the enhancement of skills acquisition so that Nigerians shall be on the right side of the digital divide.
- Develop a frame-work to facilitate the delivery of education for national orientation and civil responsibility and thereby creating a reliable avenue for the delivery of “education for living together” to all citizens.
- Increase penetration, wider reach, affordable and cost effective educational opportunities for all so that nobody is left behind.
- Institute, in an organised and comprehensive manner, open and distance learning which will facilitate workplace training and professional development, and life-long learning (FME, 2002).

In sum, the National Open University of Nigeria was established to enable education break out of the constraining vectors of access, quality, and cost. How well the National Open University of Nigeria has coped in providing higher education for all in need is the main thrust of this paper, and it has been shown that the NOUN has grossly under-performed in the intervention it was set up to achieve. Hence, attainment of the target of providing higher education for all in need in Nigeria can only be made possible with the establishment of a Two Year College System that will serve the interventionist purpose of better preparing Nigerians in need, for university education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Open and Distance Education is internationally recognized and accepted as an alternative channel for providing broader access to education in a cost-effective manner; wider and diversified curricula; and a means for continuing life-long education. Nigeria must not be left behind. For the National Open University of Nigeria to cope with the “Higher Education for all in Need”, it is recommended as follows:

1. Improved funding of NOUN is of great importance to enable NOUN do what other Open Universities are doing in terms of adequate learning materials, infrastructural update and research, to have NOUN achieve like its peers.
2. Creation of more study centres, especially in the rural areas, to be able to cope with the ever increasing population of persons seeking higher education.
3. Open and Distance Learning depends heavily on adequate power supply and efficient internet connectivity. These two facilities are disturbingly poor in the country and need urgent upgrading if the National Open University of Nigeria is to realise the objectives for which

it was established.

4. A National Open and Distance Education Commission (NODEC) should be established to make for effective and efficient supervision of NOUN. The present supervisory structure, National Universities Commission (NUC) has the handicap of seeing the National Open University of Nigeria through the window of the conventional universities. Although, they are all universities, comparing NOUN with the conventional universities is like comparing oranges with bananas.

5. Academic staff inadequacy is another major factor hindering the performance of NOUN. Enough staff that are grounded in Open and Distance Learning should be engaged to manage the National Open University of Nigeria with its peculiarities different from those of the other universities.

6. It is worthy to recommend that a further study be conducted to ascertain the extent to which NOUN has attended to Nigerians on full-time and part-time employment and those structurally excluded from higher education (those in purdah and very remote areas of the country).

7. Nigeria should as a matter of urgent necessity, embark on establishment of a Two Year College System that will serve as a facilitator of attainment of university education in this country as it is done in the developed world. The Two Year College System should automatically admit all those who successfully complete their secondary education with at least five credits but were not admitted into universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and the National Open University of Nigeria. Courses in the Two Year College System should be so comprehensively designed to match what is done in the first two years in the university such that all those who successfully graduate from them could secure automatic admission directly into the university to do their last two, three or four years respectively of their four, five or six years degree programs.

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