

ODL and access to higher education: The experiences of the University of Botswana

B. Nage-Sibande

Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning
Gaborone, Botswana

W. J. van Vollenhoven

Faculty of Education Sciences
School of Continuing Teacher Education
North-West University
Potchefstroom, South Africa
e-mail: Willie.VanVollenhoven@nwu.ac.za

J. Hendrikz

University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This interpretive qualitative study investigated why open and distance learning (ODL) within some dual mode universities seemingly failed to achieve high participation rates, compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery in the same institution. Its scope was the Botswana higher education sector. The University of Botswana (UB), the only public dual mode university in Botswana, was closely studied. The main question explored why some dual mode universities in southern Africa enrolled lower figures through ODL than the face-to-face mode of delivery, though ODL had more potential to increase access substantially than the face-to-face mode. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Purposive selection drew participants from UB, the Tertiary Education Council (TEC) and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MOESD), based on their experience in education planning, policy formulation and ODL delivery. Data were analysed through qualitative content analysis.

The study confirmed internal and external attitudes that create equivalency challenges and impede ODL growth in dual mode universities, resulting in its limited contribution to participation. It established that dual mode institutions need relevant policies, structures and enhanced resources for ODL, in order to significantly increase participation. The study consequently advocates thorough planning for a dual mode

setup, commitment of resources, monitored implementation and appropriately trained staff.

INTRODUCTION

While participation rates have increased in many southern African countries, recent studies have found that many qualified prospective students who wish to pursue further studies are generally still unable to access higher education (Dodds et al. 2008; Richardson 2009; Sikwibele and Mungoo 2009). The introduction of open and distance learning (ODL) in face-to-face mode universities has generally been regarded as a response to the new challenges posed by increased and diverse demands. It has often been identified as one of the strategies to substantially increase access to higher education. However, it would appear that, generally, ODL has made a more significant contribution to access to higher education in dedicated single mode ODL universities than in dual mode institutions.

This study sought to understand the reasons for limited access through the ODL mode of delivery in dual mode institutions. A case study of the University of Botswana (UB) was conducted in order to understand why some dual mode universities seem hesitant to expand ODL alongside the face-to-face mode. Contributing factors uncovered included: limited resources; limited monitoring mechanisms for implementation; lack of policies; rigid face-to-face structures and regulations applied to ODL; lack of sponsorship for ODL students; and perceptions of stakeholders that education provided through ODL is of a poorer quality than face-to-face education.

SAMPLE

A small sample of 17 participants was interviewed. Findings, therefore, cannot be generalised, but can be used to construct a hypothesis for further research. The selection of the three institutions and of the policy makers and implementers from those institutions was meant to give the data some triangulation and validity. Trustworthiness was ensured through this process and also by the careful selection of people who were experienced and knowledgeable in the area of study. Neither students nor staff members of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) were interviewed because they were not the focus of this study. However, since students are important stakeholders, the study recommends that future research focus on students' perspectives with regard to the value of ODL.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The equivalency concept served as the framework for the study. The concept of equivalency between ODL and on-campus face-to-face learning is concerned with the perceived quality and value of the teaching and learning experiences of teachers and students in the first environment, compared to the second (Shale 1988; Simonson 1999). Simonson et al. (1999) see the concept of equivalency as pivotal to the widespread acceptance of ODL. Shale (1988) observes four basic elements of every teaching and learning experience, which have to be satisfied in order to ensure that teaching and learning take place, namely: a teacher, a learner, communication medium and something to be taught or to be learnt. These basic elements should be provided in a way that offers the required rigour for both ODL and face-to-face learning, in order for the two modes to be considered equivalent in the facilitation of teaching and learning. The equivalency theory stresses the importance of the equivalent quality and value of the learning experiences of teachers and students in either ODL or face-to-face modes (Simonson et al. 1999). Once an institution decides to adopt both the ODL and on-campus face-to-face modes of teaching and learning and becomes dual mode, it should accord the learning experiences obtained through the two modes equivalent value if they are to make a significant contribution to the expansion of higher education. However, experience worldwide shows that face-to-face learning is given prominence over ODL in dual mode universities (Badu-Nyarko 2006; Gokool-Ramdoos 2009; Graham 2002; Ipaye 2007; Jones 2005; Mbwesa 2009; Morgan 2000; Romiszowski 2004). The lower value accorded ODL in dual mode settings has resulted in its suffocation and consequent low status. The face-to-face mode, perceived to have higher status and greater value, remains the one preferred by students, staff and other stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

A case study method was used, utilising semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The two data collection techniques provided method triangulation for the study (Patton 1990).

Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was the method of data analysis.

Analysis of findings

Analysis of both interview transcripts and documents indicated that expansion of the on-campus face-to-face mode of delivery alone was unlikely to offer the

Botswana higher education sector the capacity needed to meet students' high and diversified demands with opportunities to participate, from the foreseeable future to 2026. ODL was, therefore, identified as one of the strategies to address this problem (Dodds et al. 2008; MOESD 2008; Republic of Botswana 1994; UB 2004, 2008). Internal and external attitudes were perceived to create equivalency challenges that were observed to impede ODL growth in dual mode universities, resulting in its insignificant contribution to participation.

ODL as a strategy for expansion of the higher education sector

Of the 27 higher education institutions registered with the Tertiary Education Council (TEC), UB was the major provider at degree level by 2010 and BOCODOL recently introduced a few degree programmes. The remaining 25 institutions were offering programmes only up to diploma level (Robbins et al. 2009). The Tertiary Education Policy (TEP), adopted by Parliament in 2008, proposed the establishment of a dedicated, state-funded higher education ODL institution.

Level of demand and participation in higher education in Botswana

Participation in higher education in Botswana has increased quite substantially since independence, when there were no universities in the country, with only a handful of local graduates (Leburu-Sianga and Malobe 2000; Mogae 2005; Mokaeya 1992). However, there was a high demand which local institutions could not satisfy. Dodds et al. (2008) and Richardson (2009) noted that about 20 000 students successfully completed senior secondary education annually. Out of these school leavers, approximately 18 000 were eligible for higher education on an annual basis. However, because of limited capacity, UB would hike its entry requirements in order to reduce the number who qualified for application. This would reduce applicants to UB programmes to approximately 12 000, of which only 5 000 would be admitted. Of these 5 000 students admitted, about 3 500 would be in the 18–24 age group; about 1 000 would be adult workers; and 500 would be those changing programmes. It was estimated that if the situation continued up to 2013, cumulatively 70 000 prospective students eligible for higher education would not have access thereto through UB. By 2010, the demand for higher education in Botswana far outstripped the opportunities provided. Several studies have identified continued high demands for higher education from working adults and people above 24 years of age from different sectors of the Botswana population (Dodds et al. 2008; Kamau 2007; Sikwibele and Mungoo 2009). The participation rate in higher education for the 18–24 year old group was estimated at 11.4 per cent in 2008 (TEC 2008).

Table 1 illustrates the perceived relationship between the demand for and supply of higher education in Botswana.

Table 1: Demand for and supply of higher education in Botswana

Indications of the level of demand for higher education		
Participants' observations and experiences	Level of demand (high/low)	From documents
Large numbers of 18-24 sent outside the country for under-graduate programmes (12 participants)	⇒ high ⇐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing numbers of secondary leavers putting pressure on higher education sector (Dodds et al. 2008; Richardson 2009) - annually 18 000 senior school leavers eligible for university, UB able to admit 3 500 and 14 500 not admitted (Richardson 2009)
Influx of demand from adults (13 participants)	⇒ high ⇐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenging need for skilled population (Republic of Botswana 1997; Richardson 2009)
People in employment want to enrol (13 participants)	⇒ high ⇐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - policy requirement → all primary school teachers to have a minimum of Diploma in Primary Education (Kamau 2002, 2007; Sikwibele et al., 2009) - by 2003, 11 600 PTC holders to be upgraded to diploma level - working adults for career advancement in different professions (Dodds et al. 2008)

Three groups of potential learners that put pressure on higher education institutions for opportunities to participate were the 18–24-year-old group from senior secondary schools; adults older than 24 years; and people in employment. Government also put pressure on the system through policy expectations for enhanced levels of qualifications for certain cadres of its employees (Kamau 2002, 2007; Richardson 2009; Sikwibele et al. 2009). Considering the rate of growth that continued to be achieved within the senior secondary school sector (MOE 2004), and the emerging high demand from the adult population, participation in higher education fell far short of the demand. Botswana appeared to have remained poorly placed in the rankings of middle-income countries with regard to the provision of higher education (UB 2000).

The status of ODL in the provision of higher education

The position of ODL in the Botswana higher education sector has not yet been clarified at national level, even with the renewed support and emphasis reflected in the Tertiary Education Council (2006, 2008a and b). It is imperative to emphasise the importance of an official position or stance on the status of ODL in comparison to the full-time face-to-face delivery strategy in the higher education sector. The 2008 TEP on the National Development Plan (NDP 10) was noticeably silent regarding the status of ODL, even while it was being adopted as an important strategy for the development and delivery of higher education in Botswana. The policy's silence regarding the equivalency of the two strategies may indicate a major shortcoming (Dodds et al. 2008; Simonson et al. 1999). The higher education sector plan proposed by the TEC and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MOESD) through the Education Chapter of the NDP 10 did not seem to provide guidance regarding the purpose that ODL was expected to serve in the Botswana higher education sector and/or the contribution it was expected to make to the expansion of higher education. This represented a major gap that could adversely affect planning and the allocation of resources towards the development of ODL for the provision of higher education in Botswana.

While recognising the importance of a clear policy at national level in terms of the status accorded ODL, it was also imperative that institutional policies be established (especially in dual-mode institutions) which would guide the parallel planning and implementation of provision through the two modes in one institution, their status and relationship with each other, their mandates, and so on. It also appeared equally important that such policies be translated into clear implementation strategies, in order to provide details concerning the roles, responsibilities, expected outcomes and resource allocation for each of the two modes.

Role clarity for implementation

Although the first National Plan on Education (NPE) of 1977 indicated the need for the development of ODL, it did not specify the implementing agencies for the development of ODL in higher education. The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), on the other hand, specified the agencies that were to implement the recommendations specific to ODL expansion. For the expansion of ODL at secondary education level, the RNPE identified the Ministry of Education (MOE) through the Department of Non-formal Education to be the implementing agency (Republic of Botswana 1994). A firm recommendation was that the MOE should establish a dedicated ODL institution, with a mandate to expand pre-tertiary ODL provision. For the expansion of ODL at higher education level, the RNPE

identified UB through the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) to be the lead agency in implementation (Republic of Botswana 1994). Despite there being no specific policy on ODL, since 1994, the general policy for education provision in Botswana has given clear policy guidelines regarding which agency should play a leading role in the development and expansion of ODL in Botswana.

Financing of ODL in higher education

Students undertaking their studies through ODL and part-time face-to-face provision were not awarded study grants or study loans: '[The] Department of Higher Education and Financing (DTEF) will under no circumstances sponsor candidates who have been admitted for part-time programmes' (DTEF 2008). This policy position assumed that only adults enrolled for ODL programmes and that they would, therefore, be able to raise funds to cover the costs of their higher education. However, youths as well as adults enrolled for ODL programmes.

Youths and adults accessing higher education programmes through the face-to-face mode received direct government sponsorship, while those accessing the same programmes through ODL or part-time evening sessions had to raise their own fees and would only be reimbursed after the successful completion of the programmes. A lack of financial assistance, therefore, appeared to discourage prospective students from choosing ODL as an optional mode to access higher education. This could counteract efforts for further expansion of ODL, whose viability mainly depends on large enrolments. One of the major aspects that would enable more people to access higher education was identified as the availability of funds.

A reconciliation of policies and practices appeared necessary to resolve the seemingly contradictory positions of the MOESD. The RNPE and TEP identified ODL as a strategic option which should be supported and expanded to increase access to higher education and equity (MOESD 2008; Republic of Botswana 1994). However, through the sponsorship policy, which was supposed to provide an enabling environment, the MOESD appeared to disassociate itself from support for individuals who enrolled for ODL programmes (DTEF 2008).

ODL in the UB dual mode system

The investigation, through analysis of documents and data from interviews, indicated that UB also identified and adopted ODL as one of its delivery strategies in order to address the problem of high demand, which it seemed unable to meet through its face-to-face strategy alone (Dodds et al. 2008; Richardson 2009; UB 1999). Taking note of the important contribution it was expected to make towards the achievement of Vision 2016, the delivery of the National Human Resource

Development Strategy and economic development of the country in a global economy, UB committed itself to and equipped itself for delivering growth (UB 2008).

Rationale for ODL in the UB system

Analysis of data from both sources indicated that there was a very high demand for higher education, which UB was unable to address adequately through its face-to-face delivery strategy alone. Some UB policy documents specified the need for expanded access opportunities for higher education (UB 1999, 2000, 2004, 2008a) and stated that ODL was important in this expansion process. Participants perceived that UB introduced ODL in its system to widen participation and provide an optional route for access to its programmes for working adults. Some of the participants had observed a high demand for ODL programmes from the adult population, who could not put aside their family, community and employment commitments to study on a full-time basis for higher and further education. Adults preferred to study from home since, as one participant observed, ‘it is very difficult nowadays to leave your family and leave your job and say you are going to be at school’.

Some studies indicated that a large majority of adults preferred to study through ODL, rather than face-to-face (Dodds et al. 2008). So, both data collection methods produced the same finding, namely that UB adopted ODL in order to increase opportunities for access to and participation in higher education; to accommodate more secondary school leavers; as well as to cater for the adult population who may not be able to study full-time.

The growth and expansion of ODL within the UB system

Documents from UB (2008d) and participants’ observations indicated that ODL seemed to have grown very slowly since it was introduced into the UB system. It therefore did not address the high demands for higher education adequately. Its contribution towards increased participation was insignificant. UB (2008d) indicated an enrolment of 485 students through ODL compared to 13 791 full-time face-to-face students by the 2007/08 academic year (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of students by mode of study (adapted from UB 2008d)

	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Full-time	10 944	13 104	12 771	12 602	12 935	11 027
Part-time	1 839	2 080	2 605	2 724	2 820	2 764
Distance Learning	0	241	349	384	484	485

Participants also estimated the enrolment to be around 300 to 500 ODL students during 2008/09.

Four Bachelors degree programmes from the Faculty of Business and four diploma programmes were available through ODL during 2008/09, namely, the Diploma in Adult Education, Diploma in Accounting and Business Studies, Diploma in NGO Management and Diploma in Youth and Development. The delivery mode was mainly printed material. UB used to offer student support mainly through WebCT for degree programmes. However, this service has been discontinued. One participant observed: ‘They used to have WebCT ... mainly used by the degree students ... it doesn’t appear to be widely used now ... but in the passed [sic] two or three years back it was popular.’

It appeared that for ODL, WebCT had been used to send materials to students. However, there appeared to have been some technical problems affecting the use of technology for ODL. Another participant observed that technology had been used mainly to enhance full-time learning: ‘Because what we see in UB is that things like Web-CT, Blackboard and stuff like that ... they’re being used to actually enhance learning within the institution. So people who are already advantaged are even further advantaged. And yet when it comes to distance learners there’s ... there’s very little assistance that has been extended’.

Participants generally perceived that the support services UB provided to ODL students were poor compared to those given to their face-to-face counterparts. One participant observed that the ODL programme experienced some suffering in terms of its delivery:

Because people who are teaching there are part-time faculty from the conventional programme ... CCE does not have ... control on the faculty who teach at the distance education programme. ... They do give them the course plans and give them the information to come to classes ... they give them the time-tables. But at the end of the day really, that person has their full commitment somewhere else.

Due to a lack of adequate support from the part-time faculty, the experience was that ODL students would take too long to complete their portfolios and projects. According to one participant: ‘And every time when we have the results presented, you’ll find that ... this side there’re gaps. This is not in, this is missing. You wonder for instance, if the student has not completed their project.’

A study conducted in 2009 by Sikwibele and Mungoo on the Diploma in Primary Education offered by UB through the distance mode, revealed barriers like poor learning environment, institutional attitudes and poor learner support as some of the reasons for high failure and attrition rates in ODL programmes. A similar concern was raised regarding the commitment of part-time staff to the provision

of quality service to ODL students. In that study students complained about the lack of commitment to ODL from the faculty of conventional programmes:

We were new in the program, we needed tutors' guidance, only to find that some tutors were from the University of Botswana, and sometimes the lesson would collide with the time they are supposed to be teaching at UB. Distance education really needed special tutors, not those combining their students with us. Even though we sacrificed to meet them at late hours, they didn't come ... especially most people scheduled for the weekend. (Sikwibele and Mungoo 2009, 9)

Apart from a lack of commitment, participants in the study observed that part-time staff from conventional programmes also lacked teaching strategies and approaches for working with adult learners. 'Do they know what to do? Yes, they have got the content, but having content doesn't mean that you're able to deliver it to everybody.'

External and internal factors were perceived as contributing to ODL's low contribution towards increased participation through data from interviews. From the external environment, stigma and a low opinion of ODL on the part of the general Botswana public were identified as major constraints to the growth of ODL. It turned out that ODL was regarded as being of poor quality and having limited value when compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery; that it was associated with failure, since people regarded it as meant for students who could not make it into face-to-face programmes at a higher education level. Another major concern established from the data was a lack of sponsorship for people studying through ODL as well as those doing part-time evening programmes. The availability of sponsorship for ODL was noted as a factor that could meet the identified challenge of stigma.

Internal factors included restrictive plans and limited resources. It was found that UB planned for very low enrolment figures to be contributed by the ODL mode of delivery to the projected overall UB student body, when compared to the planned contribution of the face-to-face mode (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Full time undergraduate enrolment projections to 2015/16 (UB 2008e)

	Year	NDP 9	NDP 10
Actual	2007/08	11 205	-
Projected	2008/09	11 257	-
	2009/10		11 845
	2010/11		12 418
	2011/12		13 040
	2012/13		13 719
	2013/14		14 464
	2014/15		15 288
	2015/16		16 209

Table 4: Part-time and ODL student enrolment projections (UB 2008e)

	2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL	PT	ODL
Diploma	1916	69	1973	71	2033	73	2094	75	2156	78	2221	80	2288	82	2356	85	2427	87
Bachelor		423	0	436	0	449	0	462	0	476	0	490	0	505	0	520	0	536
Total	1916	492	1973	507	2033	522	2094	538	2156	554	2221	570	2288	587	2356	605	2427	623
Grand Total		2408		2480		2555		2631		2710		2791		2875		2961		3050

A comparison of the data from Tables 3 and 4 indicated that ODL was not planned to contribute significantly to increased participation in UB programmes.

Participants perceived plans to be restrictive, since the allocation of resources for the ODL mode was anticipated to be proportionate to its planned output and contribution. The growth of the mode would obviously be restricted by the limited resources allocated. Also emerging from the planned expansion of ODL was a possible mismatch in the NDP 10, where one part of the plan (*A Strategy for Excellence: The UB Strategic Plan to 2016 and Beyond*), seemed to be planning for growth of the ODL and part-time delivery mode. This part of the plan seemed to envisage increased part-time and ODL student enrolments. In another part, the same plan seemed to project no growth through the planned contribution of ODL. It seemed to indicate that ODL growth would remain at 3 per cent, which seemed to have been its contribution during the NDP 9 Strategic Plan. This percentage therefore would give the impression that there was no plan for any growth in this area for the NDP 10.

Equivalency between ODL and face-to-face in the UB dual mode system

This area of the data analysis process examined participants' perceptions with regard to the value that the UB community places on ODL.

- **Planned status of the ODL mode**

With regard to the status of the two modes within the system, participants maintained that in spite of what was written in various documents, in practice the face-to-face mode of delivery was the more important of the two modes in the UB system. Allocation of the target contributions for each mode towards the student body was seen as indicative of the significance of each of the modes, and through that assessment ODL was perceived to be an insignificant mode. Thus, the finding in this area was that the face-to-face mode seemed to be considered more important than the ODL mode of provision in the UB system.

- **Lack of acceptance of the ODL mode**

The findings indicated a lack of acceptance and disregard of value for the ODL mode in the UB system generally. Participants perceived a lack of demonstrated management commitment and support to the ODL mode of delivery when compared to the face-to-face mode. Participants indicated that there were no enabling policies and frameworks for ODL to fit in and be understood within the existing hitherto face-to-face structures, which participants perceived were never modified, re-aligned and/or sensitised to accommodate ODL peculiarities when the mode was introduced into the system. ODL was perceived to be too dependent on the face-to-face mode for resources in order for it to survive. Human resources and facilities were cited as the resources, which were inequitably distributed between the two modes, rendering the Centre for Continuing Education/ Department of Distance Education (CCE/DDE) only limited control over the resources they depended on for the facilitation of teaching and learning through the ODL mode.

Contribution to ODL development by academic members of staff from face-to-face faculties lacked recognition and value in the UB system. Academic staff input in the development of ODL was not considered for promotion purposes. This was cited as evidence of the lack of recognition and value for ODL. Participants perceived that the UB system did not demonstrate that the mode was effective and valuable. UB's practice of not facilitating any human resource development through ODL and not encouraging academic staff to undertake study programmes through the ODL mode was seen as a demonstration of a lack of trust in the effectiveness of ODL as a human resource development strategy.

- **ODL programme quality**

UB academic staff involved in the face-to-face mode seemed to have a perception that the structuring, preparation and delivery of ODL programmes was less rigorous and did not require the same quality procedures and standards as face-to-face programmes. Thus, the standard of ODL programmes seemed to be regarded by the UB community as being of inferior quality when compared to face-to-face programmes.

- **Recognition for academic input**

The fact that ODL was not recognised for promotion purposes, and also that no incentives were provided for ODL input, seemed to prove that ODL is not truly regarded as a valuable mode of higher education. Participants perceived that the UB system did not demonstrate that the mode was, in fact, effective and valuable. UB's practice of not facilitating any human resource development through ODL and not encouraging academic staff to undertake study programmes through the ODL mode was seen as demonstrating a lack of conviction that ODL is an effective human resource development strategy.

- **Equivalency-enhancing policies**

During the NDP 9 period, UB approved two policies whose implementation would have a direct implication regarding the concerns of equivalency of the ODL and full-time, contact modes in dual mode universities. The Distance Education Mainstreaming Policy (DEMP) was approved and adopted in 2005 (UB 2005), while the Learning and Teaching Policy (LTP) was adopted in 2008. These two policies were to be implemented within the NDP 9 period (UB 2004). The DEMP intended to have distance education applied in all university faculties and departments to further the university's priority of expanding access (UB 2005), while the LTP (UB 2008f) emphasised quality of delivery of all university programmes. Both policies could enable the university to expand enrolment in various disciplines through both ODL and full-time face-to-face provision, as well as to ensure quality in the delivery of programmes. However, findings were that the DEMP and LTP were partially implemented within CCE. Therefore they seemed not to have achieved equivalency of quality in all UB programmes, nor to have increased the number of UB programmes on the ODL mode, or to have changed practice.

The overall finding seemed to indicate that UB management and staff regarded ODL as being of low quality and value when compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery, and therefore ODL seemed to have received less recognition and acceptance within the UB community. The implication of this perception could

be negligence in implementing ODL, and a lack of growth for ODL. It could also prove difficult for the UB management and staff to convince the external stakeholders (including funding agencies, government, employers and potential students) of the importance and value of the mode, if they did not manage to fully convince one another about that from within.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research made the following recommendations.

For practice

1. Innovations need the guidance and direction of committed, well-informed, visionary and accountable leadership.
2. Setting low and unchallenging performance targets kills self-esteem and wastes resources.
3. Commitment to innovations should be effectively demonstrated by the commitment of adequate and relevant resources, policies, planning and the effective monitoring of implementation.
4. The sponsorship policy for higher education should be inclusive of ODL if the contribution of the higher education sector to the achievement of the national developmental targets is to be realised.

For future research

Future research could assess infrastructure development to establish the level of internet and other media connectivity and accessibility for the provision of higher education. Findings from such research would enhance institutional choices on viable, accessible and effective ODL models for their purposes. Future research could also focus on determining the opinions of students in dual mode institutions concerning the quality and value of education provided through ODL, when compared to the face-to-face mode of delivery.

CONCLUSION

This study has proved that ODL remains a necessary strategy for increased participation in higher education for UB, Botswana and southern Africa. It clearly indicates the need to urgently demonstrate commitment and support for the ODL mode, at national as well as dual mode institutional level, by the investment of resources towards its development and growth – this in order to enable the mode

to increase enrolments. The study pointed to some of the constraints that could be anticipated in dual mode settings, and which could possibly be avoided for the mode to achieve enhanced contributions towards increased enrolments. It also drew attention to the importance of being alert to equivalency issues in dual mode settings in order to avoid ODL growth being constrained. The study demonstrated that negative attitudes towards ODL in dual mode settings could obstruct the careful planning, the identification of relevant resources, and the setting up of structures, policies and frameworks for effective dual mode provision.

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