

Original Research Article

Distance Education as a Tool for Enhanced Access and Balanced Development in Cameroon

Dr. Joseph Besong Besong (AP)

Abstract

Department of Educational Foundations
and Administration, Faculty of Education,
University of Buea Cameroon

Email: besongjoseph@yahoo.com

The study sought to determine the relationship between distant education as a tool for enhanced access and balanced development in Cameroon. Distant education programmes constitute different programmes access to qualitative education for manpower development, productivity and job enrichment. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The sample consisted of 252 respondents from a population of 580. Data for the study were collected using distant education enhanced access and balanced development questionnaire (DEEABDQ). Data were analyzed using person product moment correlation and population t-test statistics. The hypotheses were tested at 05 level of significances. The results of the study revealed that DED as a tool for enhanced access significantly correlated with balanced development. The study further revealed that DED serves as an instrument or tool of mass instrument geared towards balancing development in terms of manpower development, productivity and job enrichment of the beneficiaries and also the society in terms of education for all (EFA). Study also profiled some recommendations.

Keywords: Balanced and Development Phrases, Enhanced Access and Development, Distant Education and Development

INTRODUCTION

Every achievement man has made so far can be attributed to education of one type or another. Similarly, whatsoever has not been achieved can also be attributed to lack of education. Definition of terminology used in the study.

1. Balanced and development is defined in the context of state acro-economy-based on effective and efficient production. In other words, manpower development is for effective efficient production in his workplace. It is the alleviation of capacity constraints for economic, human resources and rural development. Capacity building for human resources development especially in the areas of acute deficiencies such as vocational and technical education for all, especially to reduce or totally eliminate illiteracy and poverty.

- Life-long and life-wide education in order to build a learning and knowledge-based society.
- Access to and capitalization on emerging markets and opportunities both within the state/regions and globally.
- An avenue for transforming our higher education sectors to market our institutions respond to contemporary changes, development and needs of Cameroon emergence in 2035.
- Providing solutions to the perennial problems of teacher education.
- Appreciating, educating the citizens about and using information communication technology (ICT) and accelerate state, regions and community development and provide an organized entry into the global information

super highway.

- Generating spin-off effects on other sectors of state/national development such as raising development in telecommunications, information, industry, technology broadcasting postal and information and the development of many educally related small scale industries.
- Alleviating budgetary constraints as expenditure on DED has been shown in other countries to be low as 30% of the total of the conventional form of education beyond the take-off.
- Massive teacher training for all levels of education especially the universal basic education.
- Planning for and educating all sectors of the community on HIV/AIDS in a nutshell. Distant education is a tool that can enhance education as a form of human resource 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 managenalized. DED may be the only way for Cameroonians to provide access for all and achieve equitable representation and balanced by taking the distance out education.

1. Enhanced (Access): According to Longman, Dictionary, art of contemporary English (1955: 451), enhanced is the past tense of enhance which means to improve something. In this context, it means to improve the means of having the right way (access) to attain qualitative education through DED. Enhanced denotes those characteristics of accessibility to qualitative education for balance development. DED has modern means of imparting knowledge and skills to students. For example, multi-media, internet and televisions etc enhanced access to quality education. These methods allow the student enough time to cater for socio-economic demands without interrupting his studies.

2. Access (characteristics) features of DED for enhanced access and balanced development. Access can be defined as a way or right approach or entry (chamber university learners Dictionary 2004). DED has many characteristics which have given it the value for increased educational access or right approach required for balanced development. Dodds (2005) states these access or characteristics.

- DED accommodates
- Openness of entry, time and space
- Massification of education
- Quality teaching and learning
- Flexibility in the use of multi-media
- Innovation for curricular
- Technology for learning and research
- Keeping the human face and
- Opportunities for many

They are other enhanced access to qualitative education through Distance Education for balanced development Alaezi (2005) list included;

- Allowance for DED and flexible entry requirements to increased access and equity

- Degrees, Diplomas and certificates are awarded by cumulative credit to learners time to attained to their personal-social commitments.
- Courses are organized and prepared by specially designated course coordinators and programme leaders including a variety of local and international experts to provide up-to-date and latest information of easy access, group retention and retrieval.
- Programmes are made available to learners at their chosen places, homes, school or work places-to-be completed at the student's own time and pace and at affordable costs.

3. Distance education (DED) is a formatory education strategy which is used to solve the problems of an over growing number of candidates who need higher education. It serves as a bridge for the educationally disadvantaged members of the society. Distant Education (DED) 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, regard to sex race, tribe and state of origin (Alaezi,2005) 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. Perinban (2005) opines that it is an ethic that abhors the present imbalance in the basic human development of conditions, as imbalance in access to health care, nutrition, diet, shelter and education. Keegan (1988) and Otto-Peter (1993) sees distant education as an independent study as a way of liberating the students from the letters of school and college routine. DED is a special form of education in which.

- Teacher and students work apart from each other (i.e at a distance)
- Teachers and students do not communicate eye-ball-to eye-ball with each other.
- Printed materials are exchanged with the aid of a mailing system.
- Learning usually takes place in the students home.
- Teaching and learning process assumes the form of self study but guided by the teacher.
- Learning and teaching process allows a degree of openness with regards to access, age, goals, methods, duration, location etc.
- The student does not cease to work (Otto-Peter, 1995).
- DED accommodates diverse learning styles. It meets the specific and special educational needs of a variety of learners. That is, it also dwells and thrives on economies of scale.

The Cameroon state experience

In a bid to stimulate growth in education, the state has incorporated distance education in almost all the state

universities attached to faculties of education. This is a welcome development in terms of enhanced access to qualitative education for balanced development but on realization that in spite of the 8 universities established with the private own higher institutions, there is need for more; hence these institutions cannot absorb all the young eager going populace.

The different or various higher institutions may not admit the population from secondary schools hence the admission policy. This optimum population (i.e workforce) of about 20,000 people may not have chances of admission coupled with the admission policies and socio-economic problems. Education has been accepted as instrument per excellence. The optimum population also need education to improve themselves and productivity. Cameroon philosophy is to be emerging nation by 2035. This requires all facets of education to be developed. Distant education is a welcome tool for educational programmes in the country because since its inception in the state, DED seems to be providing enhanced access to qualitative education in some fields which requires manpower development for job enrichment. For example, teachers are being groomed in GTTCS (Government teacher Training Colleges) to enable aspirants of DED. The mission and vision of DED is to provide access to higher institutions for balanced development of the recipients and the state.

Statement of the problem

The growing need for enhanced access to qualitative education as a tool for balanced development in Cameroon cannot be over emphasized. The problems envisaged may be due to poor educational attainment of the members of the society and perhaps due to backwardness of the state educationally in the face of advanced contemporary society in the global economy. This may be due to the inadequate number of higher institutions. Enhanced access to qualitative education may bring a balanced development and job enrichment. This may be the concern of DED and contemporary higher institutions in the state 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 employment individuals and staff in offices need development so as to be professionals to increase productivity. The few higher institutions in the state cannot absorb those qualified or yearning for qualitative education including the teeming population of secondary school leavers who are qualified for admission but do not have access to qualitative education for one reason or another. 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, will DED as a tool for education programmes fulfill the needs of the Cameroonians for enhanced access to qualitative education for balanced development? This study seeks to provide answers to this question.

Purpose of the study

Specifically, the purpose of the study is to find out the extent to which

1. Qualitative education relates to enhanced access for balanced development.
2. Does qualitative education relate with balanced development?
3. DED relate with qualitative education

Research Questions

This research work seeks to provide answers to the following questions.

1. Does qualitative education significantly relate with enhanced access to balanced development?
2. Does qualitative education significantly relate with balanced development?
3. Does DED significantly relate with qualitative education for balanced development?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. Quantitative education does not significantly relate with enhanced access for balanced development.
2. Qualitative education does not significantly relate with balanced development.
3. Distant education does not significantly relate with qualitative education for balanced development

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was survey design because the study involved the use of a representative sample of 252 drawn from a population consisting 580 students. Conclusion was drawn based on the analysis of the available data. The stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a representative sample of the students for the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire

constructed by the researcher and titled, Distant education enhanced access and balanced development questionnaire (DEEABQ) for students. It comprised two sections. Section one sought personal data such as sex, age, years of experience and qualification of the respondents, while section two consisted of questions based on the other variables such as educational qualification, manpower development and productivity. A4 point likert type scale was used for Strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The respondents were required to express their agreement or disagreement with the items by marking one of the options. The institution was given to colleagues who are experts in test and measurement and also validated the instrument and it was found correct for both face and content validity. The researcher conducted a reliability study in three centers with 30 students who were not included in the selected sample to ascertain its reliability. The reliability coefficient of 0.058 was obtained. This was high enough to consider the instrument reliable.

The instrument was administered to the three centers of DED in the state. The centres were Universities of Bamenda, Buea and Maroua with the researcher assistants. However, permission was obtained from state coordinator(s) of DED programmes in those centres in the state before administration copies of the questionnaire were filled and selected on the spot to avoid attrition. out of 252 copies of the instrument distributed only 250 were returned. Thus, giving 99.2% return. Administration of the instrument took two weeks. All positively worded items in the instrument were scored 4 points for strongly Agree (SA), 3 points for Agree (A). 2points for Disagree (DA) and 1 point for strongly Disagree (SD).

The scoring method was reversed for all negatively worded items. The data collected were analysed using Pearson product and population t-test statistics.

RESULTS

H₀ Qualitative education does not significantly relate with enhanced access for balanced development (250).

Variable	Ex	ExzExy	r
		Ey	Eyz
Qualitative (x)	3205	42425	
Enhanced access For balanced development(y)	50635	0.50	3890 62250
P< .05; at =248, critical -r = 0.1946			

Table 1 shows that the observed -r role of 0.1946 needed for significance at .05 level of significance and 246 degree of freedom. Given this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld. The finding suggests that enhanced access to

qualitative education is needed for balanced development i.e. increases capacity building of human industry in economic development.

H₀ Qualitative education does not significantly relate with balanced development. The data for this hypothesis was analysed using Pearson product moment correlation statistics. The result is presented in the table below:

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Qualitative Education and Balanced Development (n=250)

Variable	EX	EXZ	EY	EYZ	EXY	r
Qualitative education	(x)		3413		47955	
		53700		0.38		
Balanced development			3890		62250	
P< .05 = 248: critical -r = 0.1946						

Table 2 shows that the calculated r- value of 0.38 is greater than the critical r- value of 0.1946 required significance and 248 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative upheld.

This means that there is a significant positive correlation between qualitative education and balanced development. The finding depicts that balanced development is associated with development. This is so because an educated society consists of trained manpower in different fields of economic development.

H₀₃ DED programs do not significantly relate with qualitative education for balanced development.

The data for this hypothesis was analysed using population t-test statistics. The result is presented in the table 3

Table 3. Population t-test Analysis of the level of DED programs for balanced development (n=250)

Variable	no. of items	xe	xo	SD
Expected level of DED programs		6		2.33
Observed level of DED programs		6		15.56
P< .05; of =249; critical -t .1960				

The data in table 3 reveal that the calculated t-value of 2.33 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.960 at freedom. Given these results, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is upheld. This means that DED programs for balanced development are significantly high. That is, when the recipients have access to qualitative education, there is bound to be improvement and balanced development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the findings of this study reveals a significant positive correlation between qualitative education and

enhanced access to qualitative education for balanced development. This means that when people in Cameroon have access to qualitative education deprived them in conventional higher institutions through DED programs; they will improve and perform their duties effectively. This finding is in consonant with Fabunmi (2004:258). He argues that the emergence of the DED in Cameroon helps to create the required change in skills, values, attitudes, knowledge and so on that are relevant to the development of the people and the nation. This implies that when people are developed intellectually by Imhabekhai (2004:212). He believes that a well-organized DED can assist in training adults who have sufficient and responsive knowledge skills, attitudes and values that would help them lead truly functional lives.

Therefore, DED is a tool for both theory-based and immediate practical applications. In other words, DED is a technologically mediated learning strategy in order to provide increased and equitable access to education and training and in order to have balanced development for productivity for all the citizens in the state of Cameroon (perinbam, 2005).

The third finding of the study reveals that DED programs in relationship with qualitative education for balanced development is significantly high. This finding could be attributed to the fact that both enhanced access and balanced development or manpower development and productivity seems to be adequately catered for by DED programs. This tool (ie DED) is recognized as the central point for good education, especially higher education for the state of Cameroon. It is a source for sustainable development and panacea for mass illiteracy, obscurantism, poverty, squalor, disease, de-industrialization and low productivity. Hence, the state government has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development of human and material resources.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that:

1. DED is a necessary tool for boasting enhanced access to qualitative education in Cameroon. This should be through massification hence, its mission and vision is more or less matured education.

Hence, it is supplementary to conventional higher institutions in the state with only one higher institution.

2. It is a tool that will help to eradicate poverty superstition, HIV/AIDS, squalor and diseases.

3. It is a tool that will increase the number of professionals in all facets of development. Teachers, nurses, accountants, bankers, lawyers, clerks and engineers need to be professionalized to boost efficiency and productivity in the state. That is, it is an instrument geared towards balancing development in terms of manpower development, productivity and job

environment. This will reduce de-industrialization and low productivity.

4. DED is a tool that will increase the number of businessmen and businesswomen, self-empowerment for freedom to act as employers and for socio-economic development. It is a tool or an instrument as is a means for training of specialized manpower appropriate for different vocational purposes. It is one area where the links between higher education (ie DED) and manpower development as a means of productivity. This has far-reaching benefits for mankind in manufacturing. This is particularly evident in view of the profound skills and creativity provided by the linkage of DED. Education and industrial manufacturing which frequently find expression in scientific technological and socio-economic development. This is supported in the words of Babalola (2007). He pointed out that Nigeria as well as Cameroon Higher Education Should reinvent her educational programs for youth employment so as to enable them participate effectively in the race of a competitive global economy. This should be the focus and philosophy guiding DED enhanced access to qualitative balanced development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Effective and management of DED programs in the state is paramount to ensure planning and organization of the programs so as to achieve the laudable mission of DED in terms of manpower development, productivity and job enrichment (i.e. capacity building) in the state.

2. It will increase the levels of qualitative education so as to reduce incompetence and unemployment in the state.

3. It is a means of capacity building of human resources through knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired.

4. It is a process of increasing productivity through qualitative education.

5. This reduce poverty, diseases, HIV/AIDS and superstition

6. To achieve the vision of DED as a tool in the state

7. Studies centers should be equipped and conducive for learning

8. Course facilitators should diversify and pace course activities and also avoid lectures. They should develop strategies for students' reinforcement repetition and review, remediation.

9. Make sure facilitators are men and women who are capable of imparting their goods effectively well.

10. Motivate the facilitators by paying them regularly and when due

11. The programs should be affordable, cost effective and flexible education for all. That is, the cost should be low to the cost of conventional higher institutions.

REFERENCES

- Alaezi OA (2005). National Open University Plan, Enhancing Higher Education in Nigeria through Open Distance Learning Delivery System, Lagos, Noun.
- Babalola JO (2007). Reinventing Nigerian Higher Education for Youth Employment in Competitive Global Economy. Jerry Commercial Production, Calabar.
- Chamber University Learners Dictionary (2004). Bershire, Cox and Way Man Lxd
- Dodda A (2005) Universities. Open University Life-Long Learning Delivery System Lagos: Noun
- Fabunmi FA (2004). The role of libraries and information center in distance and open learning education: in E.O. Fagbamiyeetal (Eds)... op.cit..255-262.
- Gadsby G (1995). Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman Group. England.
- Imhabekhai CI (2004). National Open University of Nigeria. A wasteful of worthwhile ventures. In E.O Fagbamiye et al (Eds) ...op.at 205-216
- Jegede O (2003). Taking the distance out of higher education in 21st century Nigeria. An invited convocation lecture presented at the federal polytechnic Oko. Anambra state. Friday, November 28.
- Jegede O (2004). Formulating viable national and regional informational communication technologies and open and distance learning policies: an invited key note presented at the sub-regional ministerial conference on integration of ICT in education. Issues and challenges in Africa held at NICONNUGA Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria.