

**Administrative Problems of Open and Distance Education in Nigeria.  
A Case Study of National Open University of Nigeria**

**Rev. Fr. Kajo, Didacus Ph.D**  
**Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies,**  
**University of Agriculture, Makurdi**  
**08068169560**  
**Didacuskajo@gmail.com**

**Moze, Terngu Eunice**  
**Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies,**  
**University of Agriculture, Makurdi**  
**07030731603**  
**Terngumoze@gmail.com**

**Ortsa, Gabriel M.**  
**Department of Educational Foundations**  
**Faculty of Education**  
**Benue State University Makurdi**  
**08091059231, 08082359010**  
**gabrielortsa@gmail.com**

**Abstract**

*This study investigated Administrative problems of Open and Distance Education in Nigeria with particular reference to National Open University of Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to identify the administrative problems of National Open University of Nigeria and proffer solution to these problems. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the 3000 administrative staff in the 69 study centers of National Open University of Nigeria. A sample of 300 administrative staff in all the 69 study centers of National Open University of Nigeria was used for the study. A 10 – item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher titled “National Open University Administrative Problems Questionnaire (NOUAPQ)” was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that the personnel department of National Open University of Nigeria and the Federal Government should ensure that they appoint qualified administrators and planners as centers Directors in various centers. The programme should be adequately funded, facilitators should be regularly paid, adequate number of staff should be appointed and facilities should be sufficiently provided.*

**Key words:** Administrative Problems, Open and Distance Education, National Open University of Nigeria

## **Introduction**

Administration is the component part of management which is concerned with facilitating the accomplishment of objectives of an organization through the systematic management of constraints and careful utilization of the available limited resources which include human, capital, material, equipment, space and work techniques or technology. Administration entails activities involving people and materials and it comes into play when two or more people are involved in shared activities. It directs the behaviour of people towards set objectives.

Peretomode as cited in Ochai (2013) defines administration as a discipline that is concerned with facilitating accomplishment of the school organization through systematic utilization of available human and material resources. Mbiti as cited in Aba and Odeh (2012) affirms that “administration is meant to formalize system which is intended to control, supervise, plan and made decisions about the various activities of an organization on the basis of established authority”. Administration therefore means planning, organizing, directing, leading, controlling, supervising, motivating, evaluating and unifying human and material resources towards the attainment of an organization goals and objectives.

Open and Distance Education (ODE) is a means of providing access to education, particularly tertiary level of education. It is the form of education and training that uses, learning resources rather than attending classroom session. Open and Distance Education according to Mudasiru (2006) is a process used to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance. It is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology and instructional system designs that aim to deliver education to students who are not physical “on site” in a traditional classroom or campus. Keegan (1996) defines Open and Distance Education as an educational approach in which there is quasi separation of the learner and the teacher in time and space. The National Universities Commission (NUC, 2013) defines Open and Distance Education as a formal education system that deploys Information and Commission Technology (ICT) facilities to communicate, teach, coach and facilitate productive learning amongst students who are domiciled in distance locations. Such education system is said to be Open because students are not limited by such conditions or factors like age, sex, pregnancy, work, race, religion and others.

National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is an, open distance learning institution renowned for providing functional, flexible, accessible, cost effective education adequate for flourishing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond. Aba and Odeh (2015) defines National Open University of Nigeria as an

institution which provides university education using the open distance learning instruments to persons that time and space denied them from attending regular universities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

National Open University of Nigeria was established in 1983 with the mandate to deliver university education at the doorsteps of every interested Nigerian. Despite its suspension in 1984 it was restructured in 2002. However there is public outcry among the staff and students of National Open University of Nigeria in many centers about the problems they encountered in these centers which are suspected to be administrative problems which is propelling teaching and learning in some study centers of National Open University of Nigeria. Some of these problems are unqualified centers Directors, adequate funds are not provided for effective running of this programme, most of the study centers are cited in already existed structures as a result there is no room for sport and extra-curricular activities. The researcher observed that facilities in most of these study centers are inadequate. Because most of these study centers are cited in already existing structures, lecture halls are inadequate which result to a lot of stress to staff and students. In the process of examination students enter into the examination hall in batches because the hall is not large enough to accommodate all the students, therefore the staffs who are conducting these examinations are faced with the problem of closing late.

Computers are adequate supplied in some of the study centers but there are no rooms to display the computers, there are no laboratories and workshops. Added to these factors is inadequate number of staff in some study centers, the few available staff performs so many functions. The issue of non-payment of facilitators makes them to lose interest in the job. From personal observation of the researcher, the facilitators are not paid for so many years. There is no proper way of keeping records in most of the study centers. Students' records are arranged in files and kept in administrative office instead of storing in the computers. It is therefore the intention of the researchers to examine the administrative problems of Open and Distance Education in Nigeria with particular reference to that of National Open University of Nigeria.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the Administrative Problems of Open and Distance Education in Nigeria with particular reference to National Open University of Nigeria and ways of solving them.

## **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the administrative problems of National Open University of Nigeria study centers in Nigeria?
2. What are the solutions to the administrative problems of National Open University study centers in Nigeria?

## **Hypothesis**

One hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the administrative problems of National Open university study centers in the two broad geo- political zones (made up of North-East, North-West, North-Central and South-East, South-West, South-South) of Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was used for this study. The study is confined to National Open University of Nigeria which has six geo political zones. The population of the study comprised all the 3000 administrative staff in the 69 study centers in National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN profile 2016). A sample of 300 administrative staff in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria was used in the study. The National Open University Administrative Problems Questionnaire (NOUAPQ) was used for data collection. The NOUAPQ had section A and B. Section A had 5 items which focused on administrative problems in the study centers of NOUN. Section B also had 5 items which measured the solutions to the problems stated in section A. These are measured in a four point likert-type rating scale of Strongly Agree, SA=4 points, Agree, A=3 points, Strongly Disagree, SD=2 points and Disagree, D=1 point. The instrument was validated by two experts in the Department of Educational Foundations and General Studies University of Agriculture Makurdi, who carefully scrutinized the instruments before the final draft was made. The Cronbach alpha reliability technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained from the instrument which indicated that the instrument was reliable for usage. The instrument was administered on 10 administrative officers of outreach centers of north-central geopolitical zones with

the aid of some research assistance. 300 questionnaires administered were retrieved and used for data analysis. While means and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results and Findings

This section presents and discusses the results of the study.

### Research Question One

What are the administrative problems of National Open University of Nigeria study centers in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean Ratings of Administrative Problems of National Open University of Nigeria Study Centers**

S/NO	Item Description	Responses from N. East, NW and N. Central						Responses from S. East, SW and S.S. Geo-Political Zone					
		SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1	Appointment of non-specialist in educational administration and planning as centre directors.	106	72	70	52	2.78	Accepted	108	95	48	49	2.85	Accepted
2	Inadequate funding.	103	84	66	47	2.81	Accepted	80	83	78	59	2.56	Accepted
3	Irregular payment of facilitators.	104	80	60	56	2.77	Accepted	104	80	64	52	2.79	Accepted
4	Insufficient staff.	68	100	64	68	2.56	Accepted	100	93	62	45	2.80	Accepted
5	Inadequate school facilities.	100	92	60	48	2.79	Accepted	108	90	60	42	2.88	Accepted
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>					<b>2.74</b>	<b>Accepted</b>					<b>2.78</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Data on Table 1 showed that the mean rating for items 1-5 for Responses from North East, North West and North Central were 2.78, 2.81, 2.77, 2.56 and 2.79 respectively while that of South East, South West and South-South Geo- Political Zone were 2.85, 2.56, 2.79, 2.80 and 2.88. The cluster mean of 2.74 and 2.78 were also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. Based on the cut-off point of 2.50; it implies that all the mean ratings were above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that all the items are administrative problems of National Open University of Nigeria study centers in Nigeria.

## Hypothesis Testing

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the administrative problems of National Open University study centers in the two broad geo-political zones (made up of North-East, North West, North Central and South East, South West, and South- South) of Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of t-test on significant difference between the administrative problems of National Open University study centers in the two broad geo-political zones (made up of North-East, North-West, North-Central and South-East, South-West, and South-South) of Nigeria

Geo-Poiltical Zones	N	$\bar{X}$	STD.	Df (n-2)	Level of sig	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
N. East. NW and N. Central	300	2.77	1.114	298	0.05	43.06	1.96	Ho
S. East. SW and S.S.	300	3.02	0.94					Rejected

$P = 0.05 > 0.00$

The result on the Table 3 showed that t-cal value of 43.06 is greater than the t-table value of 1.96 checked at 0.05 level of significance and 298 degree of freedom. The t-test results indicate that the null hypotheses was not accepted, hence there is a statistically significant difference. It was observed that N. East. NW and N. Central scored ( $x = 2.77$ ) while S. East. SW and S.S. is ( $x=3.02$ ). This result implies that, there is a significant difference between the administrative problems of National Open University study centers in the two broad geo-political zones (made up of North-East, North West, North Central and South East, South West, and South- South) of Nigeria.

### Discussion of findings

The findings of the study indicated on table 1 shows that there are administrative problems in National Open University of Nigeria. The result of the finding agrees with Obioha and Udihi (2011) who observed that the most serious problem is the administration of study centers by staff that lack sufficient experience in the field of educational administration. The center Directors, main duty is to get things done in a proper way from the administrative workers. They are supposed to be experts in educational administration, planning and supervision. Findings on inadequate funding shows that it is only when sufficient funds is released to the administrators that they can do a reasonable work. This supports the views of Mudasiru (2006) who states that successive governments in Nigeria must not only allow the continuation of Open and distance education programmes, it must be supported through adequate funds. Facilitators should be regularly paid so that they will show commitment in the discharge of their duties. This support the views of Moore (2005) who observes that facilitators from different study centers of National Open University of Nigeria have complained about irregular

payment and omission of their names in the schedule for payment which results to negative motivation of the affected facilitators, for that they become frustrated and their rate of work is drastically reduced. The process of school administration as functions creates positions for people to perform different types of jobs. Since there are different jobs to be performed, enough personnel are required for employment for the jobs.

Aguna (2006) observes that the number of staff in most study centers is not adequate. The available number of staff in these centers performs different functions. Supporting this view, Dugguh (2004) affirms that human resource management (staff/personnel) is the key ingredient affecting organizational competitiveness and its ability to fulfill its objectives. An organization must provide the needed products or services if it must survive. Some of the study centers of NOUN are not equipped while some are poorly equipped. The study centers do not have large classes and large halls that could properly accommodate large number of students. There is also lack of laboratories, libraries and other facilities. The finding is in line with Aluede and Idogho (2012) who recognized the fact that the low access to university education in Nigeria could be the result of low infrastructural facilities.

In terms of solutions to these administrative problems in National Open University of Nigeria, findings of this study shows that specialist in educational administration and planning should be employed as centre Directors, the programme should be sufficiently funded, there should be regular payment of facilitators, adequate number of staff should be appointed and facilities should be adequately provided.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Findings from this study reveal that there are administrative problems which are impediments to the growth of and success of National Open University Education in Nigeria. Based on the findings the following recommendations were made to remedy the administrative problems in National Open University of Nigeria.

1. It is the responsibility of the personnel department of National Open University of Nigeria to appoint qualified centre Directors in all the study centers. The federal government should provide adequate funds for the smooth running of this programme.
2. Adequate number of staff should be employed in various study centers and facilities should be made available in each study center.

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