# TOWARDS ACHIEVING QUALITY OF DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING IN BOTSWANA – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:  A CASE STUDY OF BOTSWANA OPEN UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

The object of this study is to discover the quality of distance and open learning in Botswana.  The purposes that guided the study are to identify parameters that influence quality in ODL(Open Distance Learning), to establish the level of awareness that prevails among participants about utilisation of OER(Open Educational Resources). This study recommends some solutions that address the challenges confronting the quality of ODL in Botswana. To guide this study research questions were formulated based on the opportunities of utilizing OER: and  the possible solutions that can be used to  address the challenges confronting quality ODL in Botswana. In this research the focus is on examining the quality of open and distance learning in Botswana. A qualitative approach was used in the study because it allowed generation of non-numeric data by using in-depth open-ended interviews. The researcher oversees interview guides for discussions which focus the groups on the interviews. It was found that some learners were not conversant with OER while some showed a degree of understanding the concept of OER.  These findings indicate that there are differentials in the use of OER by students and goes on to imply that good  OER is likely to promote quality.

**Keywords:** ODL ( Open Distance Learning ),  OER ( Open Educational Resources )

## 1.   INTRODUCTION

It is contextualised on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institutions of higher learning. The current trends are that Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained increased attention as they enhance quality teaching and learning as well as promoting lifelong learning in ODL mode and in conventional institutions. The Botswana Open University (BOU) for a long time has used the Moodle an online platform as its major resource for teaching and learning, however, the extent to which the institution has utilised OER in the teaching and learning, research, and curriculum design has not been well documented. Therefore, this study examines the extent to which BOU realises quality in teaching and learning through the ODL mode by interrogating the BOU students.

Botswana Open University offers all its programs through open and distance learning. The programs offered have in-class sessions that are conducted twice in a semester and thereafter the students do about 80% of the learning on their own. The study would look at policy on quality and what the learners who are stakeholders say about quality. OER are concerned with "digital content in the education sector" (OECD, 2007, p. 21) and have the potential of enhancing existing content (Masterman & Wild, 2011). OER are teaching, learning or research materials that are in the public domain which can be accessed by anybody or released with an intellectual property licence that allows for free usage, adaptation and distribution.. African universities have contributed only 4% of OERs with Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) saying that there are only 2% institutions offering distance and open learning in Sub Saharan Africa (Hodgkinson-Williams, 2015). In Tanzania, open and distance education is offered but the impact of OER is very low with some practitioners not being aware of their existence (Mtebe and Ranamo, 2014). McGreal (2013 p. xv) sees the attractiveness of OER as being brought about by their flexibility in relation to technological and legal issues, open standards, open license which means that OER can be used anywhere, anyhow, any time. Kenya also has made some steps towards increasing awareness of OER, (Wanjohi, 2014). OER is associated with e-learning; an answer to affordable education access in developing countries (Rejas-Masilera, 2010).

The purpose of the study is to describe and compare the attitudes, competencies and performances of ODL graduates at their workstations. The study also assessed the impact of OER in quality learning and teaching. The causes of low performance at work by ODL graduates is not known and this needs to be researched on because if such is not addressed the effect may affect the generations to come. What is known is that in the Botswana Open University, the need for quality is found in its Quality Assurance Unit's mandate where it aims to provide world class scholarship, research, community service, excellence in delivery, innovation, integrity, ethical standards and to satisfy the need for Open and Distance Learning, (BOCODOL: Academic Integrity Policy, 2011; BOCODOL: Tertiary Programmes Enrolment Policy, 2011). The study establishes issues that lead to the gap between BOU policies on quality and the products that graduate through such a system. This study investigates factors and issues that militate against realisation of quality in open and distance learning. There is a link between ODL and OER usage in realising quality learning and because there is a need to achieve quality distance and open learning and for it to be achieved there is a need

to look at the usage of OER by students and encourage them to use OER effectively for them to be grounded in the knowledge, competence and performances.

## 1.1. Significance of the study

The significance of the study is that the findings are expected to close the gap between policy articulations and the reality because trainee teachers' competence levels are closely correlated with the nature of education they go through. The study will also inform the public on the importance of OER in institutions of learning if quality graduates are to be produced. The different key stakeholders that can benefit from the study are students and facilitators in colleges and universities. The study will challenge the student teachers so that they can scrutinise the value of OER as they learn through ODL. Facilitators of different modules will also benefit from the study.

The purpose of the study is to examine the challenges and opportunities of achieving quality learning at BOU..

## 1.2. Objectives of the Study

Specifically the objectives are :

i. To identify parameters that influence quality in ODL

ii. Establish the level of awareness that prevails among participants about utilisation of OER

iii. Examine the different challenges of assessing the OER

iv. Examine the opportunities in utilising OER

v. Advance some possible solution that address the challenges confronting quality ODL in Botswana

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Online and open distance learning has increased in Africa and this mode of learning has become fashionable in countries such as South Africa to the Sudan, Nigeria to Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, (Olubor and Ogonor (this 2008).

It was observed that the provision of open and distance learning was received with mixed feelings as observed that, "…eyebrows are raised in relation to the quality of distance education provision by academic communities and other stakeholders who have been accustomed to the traditional face to face tuition", (Shava and Ndebele, 2014 page 312).

Researchers also found out that Open and Distance experiences a number of challenges that were found that lack of training in distance learning methodology, lack of standard criteria to measure quality for such services, inefficient administrative systems, poor organizational support and lack of motivation of the academics all seem to account on quality distance and online teaching,(Stella and Gnanam 2004; Belawati and Zuhairi 2007; Reju and Olakulehin 2008; Sikwibele and Mungoo 2009; Nyerere et al. 2012)

### 2.1. Level of OER awareness among potential users

In a study that was done in Liberia the findings were that some learners were still unaware of the existence of OER, (Downes, 2009). Most of the learners were unaware of the existence of OERs, and the few that had an idea about them lacked knowledge on how to access them, (Groff, & Mouza, 2008). Most of the learners were unaware of the existence of OERs, and the few that had an idea about them lacked knowledge on how to access them, (Groff, & Mouza, 2008). Most teachers who received their teacher education in the 80s lacked ICT competences and it became difficult for them to effectively support learners. They also lacked supporting practical knowledge that hindered in preparing and conducting online classes (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

### 2.2. Impact of utilisation of OER in higher education

Botswana, like many African countries, has faced enormous challenges in the production of and access to quality relevant teaching and learning materials and resources in tertiary institutions, (Pearson, & Naylor, 2006). . A study reported that there was less usage of OER in African open learning universities and these were attributed to poor infrastructure, negative attitudes, lack of ICT competencies, and other skill gaps among teachers, as well as lack of administrative support, are some of the challenges experienced in the adoption and use of OERs in some institutions of higher learning.

### 2.3. Challenges in providing quality ODL

The study is concerned about the challenges participants encounter in accessing Open Educational Resources and literatures seem to concur with the researcher because, Pachler, & Daly, (2011 pp 1) , identified the following as factors that militate against realizing quality distance and online learning "administrative issues, social interaction, academic skills, technical skills, learner motivation, time and support for studies, cost and access to the Internet, and technical problems." Open and distance learning started as a print-based mode of course development and delivery. In 2000 it introduced online tutorials using an open source learning management system (LMS) initially for students who were unable to attend the monthly face-to-face tutorial sessions or unable to attend daily lessons and the quality learning was to be maintained, (Pachler, & Daly, 2011).

Indeed, the literature reviewed seems to suggest that there are challenges in the utilization of OER, when looking at the conventional system of learning it is also clear that OER contributes to quality learning, (Taylor, 2001). Meaningful distance and online learning platforms can also create course blog sites and use Web-based conferencing systems and social networking services which can complement OER in a bid to foster quality learning.

### 2.4 Physical Facilities in Distance and open education

It is necessary to be aware of the basic policies that guide distance and open learning in different countries, (Carnoy 2013). The Botswana Open University policy talks of quality of Open and Distance Learning.

A policy is a guide as such institutions offering education through distance learning ought to have a policy that governs their operations.

Guskey (1990) and Musau (2013) found out that lack of library facilities was one of the most serious problems standing in the way of achieving high education standards in learning institutions, whereas Ayoo (2012) carried out a study on the effects of colleges physical facilities on academic performance and established that availability of facilities had a direct link with the performance of learners in examination.

### 2.5 Staffing and quality of education

There should be optimum use of the available teachers if quality content delivery is to be achieved (RoK, 2008). Ngala (1997) says that where teachers are scarce, heads of department may blame poor quality on this. According to Telli (2013) teachers are the most essential agents for ensuring quality of education is attained within and outside conventional classrooms. Placing teachers and learning at the centre of education is an important step in advancing dialogues and securing quality learning (Sayed, 2010).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Under Research methodology the design used in the study for data collection which answers the research questions are discussed. A qualitative approach is used by the researcher, in collecting, generating, processing and analysing data. The qualitative dimension gives details, perceptions, views and personal experiences. The qualitative approach is defined by Creswell (2014:33) as, "…an approach to inquiry involving collecting qualitative data and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks."

**Research approach** is more appropriate because it will explore beyond numbers. In research, the researcher is also a participant. He/she can persuade, interact, ask questions, observe and even reach the point of re-rolling. Drawing from the above observations the researcher can collect rich information from students and teachers. Qualitative methodology shall be adopted in this research, based on the necessity to achieve the main objectives of the study.

In this study the researcher shall interpret views of respondents from research instruments. The above is supported by Merrian and Simpson (2000), who argue that qualitative research enables the researcher to uncover the lived experiences of individuals through enabling them to interpret and attach meaning to their experiences and in the process the researcher constructs their world.

### 3.1 Challenges that may be faced by the researcher in using the qualitative approach

Due to the large quantity of data to be collected through the varied methods, it is going to be difficult to analyse the data all at once. The researcher shall mitigate this problem by doing data analysis concurrently with data collection. This will mean that data will be analysed throughout the research process to guard against this weakness, the researcher will thoroughly plan by putting in place checklists for participant observation and discourse analysis.

### 3.2 Research Design

Houser (2011:148), holds that, "there are four philosophies namely positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism," which influence a research design. Positivism embraces the stance of a natural scientist, in which a researcher comes up with a hypothesis to be tested, and the techniques to be used in collecting data and a case of a study is designed to generate quantitative data (Saunders et al 2013). Realism philosophy is a philosophical position which says that what the senses display to us, as reality is the truth and the truth can be proved using a measuring instrument hence being able to quantify, (Houser, 2011). Interpretivism advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand differences between humans in our role as social actors (Stacks and Hocking, 2012). The data collection technique mostly used in this philosophy is qualitative. Pragmatism philosophy believes that either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge depending on the research question, and the data collection technique can be either quantitative or qualitative (Saunders et al, 2013).

### 3.3 Population of the Study

The study is carried out at five Primary schools in Gaborone region. The target population of this study was approximately 20 participants which included those in management positions but in the end only 11 availed themselves for the interviews. 11 participants are deemed a sizeable good population in a qualitative study as in-depth generating of data was done.

### 3.4 Sampling procedure

Sampling is a process of selecting observations in this case the subjects to interview. The sample size used in this study was 11 teachers, which was about 55% percent of the entire target population. This sample size was chosen because it is workable considering the time and resources available in carrying out the study.

.In this study, there were two groups of respondents which were primary school heads and primary school teachers but only those who had gone through BOU. Those who did their education through the conventional system were not part of the study.

**Study sample**

#### Table 1: Study Sample

| Subjects | Data Collection Method | Reason for choice of method | Population Size | Sample Size | Sample Criteria | Data Collection Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Management Team | Interview | Most convenient | 5 | 3 | Convenient sampling | 1st June 2019 |
| Primary school teachers | Interview | Most convenient | 15 | 8 | Convenient sampling | 1st June 2019 |
| Total | | | 20 | 11 | | |

### 3.5 Instrumentation

An interview guide was prepared, and it had 4 sections. The first part comprised demographic information of participants. The second section addressed objective 1; third section addressed objective 2 while the last section addressed objective 3. Responses were recorded verbatim.

### 3.6 Data Collection

#### 3.6.1 Qualitative Methods of Data collection

Observation methods can be used in collecting qualitative data. Observation method has some shortcomings, for instance researchers may be biased to their observations as they tend to interpret things based on their own cultural background and beliefs.

Focus group discussions are another method of generating data. These are group interactions that the researcher facilitated as a moderator, where perceptions or views, knowledge and opinions were exchanged. Patton (2002) defines focus group interview as an interview with a small group of respondents on the topic of interest.

An interview is defined by Best and Khan (1993) as a method that allows a researcher to gather first-hand information in its natural state through verbal questioning and answering. The selected interviewees were asked questions from the prepared interview guides.

#### 3.6.2 Rationale for using interview method and possibility document.

The researcher, in this study, used interviews with open ended questions and this enabled the collection of qualitative data. The interviews were used because it was the best in generating qualitative data of this kind in this study, considering the research objectives, (Goodman, 2016). According to Evalued (2006) the main advantages of interviews are that they provide detailed information about personal feelings, perceptions and opinions.

### 3.7 Data presentation, analysis and interpretation procedures

The collected data is presented in small units in words, phrases and figures. Verbatim transcription is undertaken.

#### 3.7.1 Data Analysis

The analysis of content is in a systematic way of establishing the frequencies, occurrences of words, phrases and sentences, which had meaning, (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001). It also involved the qualification of narrative qualitative material. This method of analysis is initially used to analyse the respondents' expressions and their experiences. . Data collected through interviews and focus group discussions is made into readable form for analysis purposes. After organizing the data, the researcher then codes each page of data. Coding the pages made it easier for the researcher to identify the various sources as more data is

collected, (Merriam, 2009). The next step is identifying the units of meaning in the data, which is a process known as uniting the data, (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). This is done by carefully reading through interview transcripts and documents. The analysis of data in this study is not linear because the researcher did not collect data and after collecting started analysing it particularly the qualitative.

### 3.8 Ethical Consideration

The research is to be conducted in an area which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education therefore permission to carry out the research study in the targeted district is sought from the Provincial Education Director and the Botswana Open University. This takes care of the legal implications of the study. The researcher is aware that when dealing with human beings as research subjects, there is a need to respect human rights through the observance of some ethical considerations. Bulmer (2001) asserts that ethical considerations are an essential element of the research process.

In carrying out the study, the researcher should be concerned with the well-being of the participants to protect them from being harmed. Data collection process in qualitative research is an on-going and evolving process, with the likelihood of proximity and friendliness between the participant and the researcher.

The participants will also be informed that the data to be collected will be used only for the research purpose, therefore, the identity will remain anonymous..

There was confidence that the study would also yield credible findings to the participants and to those who would read the research report.The strategy used in making the study credible is triangulating data generation tools and data generation sources. Informants and readers who associate a credible researcher with credible research findings are likely to consider the researcher and the study as dependable.

## 4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULT

This chapter presents, interprets and analyses data and discusses the outcomes of the data collected, (Creswell, 2014). The presentation of the analysis is tied to the objectives, and research questions.

### 4.1 Demographic data

The population of this study was drawn from the two teacher education programs. The participants were conveniently selected. The main goal of convenient sampling is that it focuses on the elements of a population that are easy to access to answer research questions, (Dolores and Tongc, 2012). Rather, it is a choice that is influenced by availability of the participants who were interviewed. The target population for the study was eleven respondents which is correct for a qualitative study and interviews were used generating data. This allowed an in-depth generation of data.

The interviews answered the research questions below:

● What parameters can be used in measuring quality ODL?

● What is the level of awareness that prevails among participants about utilisation of OER?

● What are the different challenges participants are facing in accessing OER?

● What are the opportunities of utilizing OER?

● What are the possible solutions that can address the challenges confronting quality ODL in Botswana?

The data was presented according to biographical data, and theme and the themes included:

● Parameters can be used in measuring quality ODL

● Level of awareness that prevails among participants about utilisation of OER

● Challenges participants are facing in accessing OER

● Opportunities of utilizing OER

● Possible solutions that can address the challenges confronting quality ODL in Botswana

### 4.2 Biographical Data

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by gender**

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 2 | 18.18 |
| Female | 9 | 81.82 |
| Total | 11 | 100 |

The above reveals that the distribution of the respondents by gender shows that 18.18% of the participants were male while the female participants constituted 81.82%. As a result, it can be concluded that there were few male participants when compared to females. This can also be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents were drawn to the field of early childhood education which is most preferred by females.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by Age**

| Age Group | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 24-28 | 2 | 18.1 |
| 29-33 | 0 | 0 |
| 34-38 | 5 | 45.45 |
| 39-43 | 4 | 36.36 |
| Total | 11 | 100 |

The table 3 presents the distribution of the respondents by age, showing that 18.1% of the participants were within the age group 24-28 while the majority (45.45%) participants were within the age group 34-38, the second largest group was 36.36% (39-43 age group).  As a result, it can be concluded that most participants were aged between 34 and 38 years.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by program of study**

| Program | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| BEd Primary | 3 | 27.3 |
| BEd ECED | 8 | 72.7 |
| Total | 11 | 100 |

Table 4 presents  the distribution of the respondents by the programme they studied or the programme they are currently studying. 27,3% studied BEd Primary Education programme while the majority (72.7%) studied BEd Early Child Education Programme. As a result, it can be concluded that most participants did BEd Early Child Education.

**Table 5: Distribution Of respondent's year of completion**

| Completion status | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| + 2 year | 7 | 63.6 |
| Still Studying | 4 | 36.4 |
| Total | 11 | 100 |

Table Number 5 shows the distribution of the respondents by year of completion and shows that the program was completed in two years or more depending on other variables such as retake of some modules or deferring some semesters. 63.6% completed the programme while 36.4 were still students at the time of the study. The total population of the study was 11 and this is observable in all the tables; it was a reasonable population in a qualitative study.

**4.4  Data Presentation and Analysis of findings**

Themes emerged during the interviews that were conducted with the graduates and students of Botswana Open University.

**Table 6  Themes and Sub-themes on parameters to measure quality in ODL**

| Themes | Sub-themes | Issues that came out |
|---|---|---|
| Parameters can be used in measuring quality ODL | Usage of OER by students | Process of using OER is not clear to me |
| | Policy on OER | Policy is in place to guide operations of the institution |
| | | Perceive it as a useful thing and that benefits me |
| | perceptions on utilisation of OER | These are scholarly sources |
| | | OER has positive effect on quality ODL |
| | Impact of OER in teaching and learning | Positive attitude towards ODL |
| | | Some of us perceive them negatively |
| | Quality of ODL offered at BOU | OER contribute  towards quality in quality learning |
| | | Quality  OER lead to quality acquisition of knowledge |

#### 4.4.1.0 Parameters can be used in measuring quality ODL

The theme on the parameters that can be used to measure quality open and distance learning was broken into sub themes and these subthemes are, usage of OER by students, Policy on OER, perceptions on utilisation of OER, Impact of OER in teaching and learning and attitudes of students towards ODL.

#### 4.4.1.2 Policy on OER

A policy is a guide that facilitates effective implementation of a programme. All organisations are guided by policy hence the ethical and professional standards are adhered to. There is nowhere one can talk of usage of OER when there is no hard stick. Open education policies are formal regulations regarding support, funding, adoption, and use of open educational **resources (OER)).** Such policies are designed to support the creation, adoption, and sharing of OER and the design and integration of OEP into programs of study. Open education policies underscore the viability and value of OER in teaching and learning and can help inculcate the mindset of using OER universities.

#### 4.4.1.3 Perceptions on utilization of OER

The issues that came out during interviews on perceptions suggest that participants' perception about utilisation of OER was positive because a participant indicated that,

*"OER is a pillar in any learning environment and it is even important in distance and online learning since these are learners who do most of the work by themselves,"* (Participant 1).

The other participant pointed out that, *"OER are scholarly sources whose main aim is to support learning,"* (Participant 2).

*perceptions of OER may be confounded by a belief that lower quality is associated with low or no price,"* (Participant 3).

*"Consumers of a product may use price as a measure of quality which could be detrimental to OER adoption given its zero price,"* (Participant 4).

#### 4.4.1.4 Level of awareness of OER by Participants

*"OERs are not commonly used because learners are not familiar with how to access and make use of them."*

Which seem to agree with another Respondent 5, who said,

*"... the level of awareness of OERs among students is very low."*

*"an awareness of the value of OER has to be communicated to the student population and to add on to that students should be taken through such platforms so that they gain confidence in using such even when alone,"* (Participant 6).

The other participant posed a challenge by saying,

*"The department and faculty must establish whether students or instructors believe that OER are of similar quality to traditional course materials,"* (Participant 7).

*"The opportunities of using OER are very narrow because I have to be on campus even though at times one can access it wherever one is,"* which becomes a challenge for students far from the regional campuses,"(Participant 8).

While Participant 9, said,

*"The unfortunate issue is that when people talk of OER they seem to assume that every learner has access to the internet wherever they are. What makes students not be aware of this resource is because it is strongly connected to the internet."*

If proper orientation to students is done, *"even though OER can be new to students, most indicated an overall positive viewpoint of OER in terms of supporting their learning goals in their respective courses,"* (Participant 10).

#### 4.4.1.5 Challenges faced by participants in accessing OER

Challenges faced by participants in accessing OER emerged as a theme, the sub themes were internet connectivity, relevance of the teaching learning resources and copyright issues.

Participant 2 suggests that:

*"learner needs, and interest are not taken care of when using OERs,"*

The other Participant, concurred with Participant 2 by saying,

*"knowing the target group is essential since the OER is supposed to address curriculum objectives and meet the needs of the local community."*

Participant 3 said,

*"...was observed when one institution had challenges in obtaining copyright clearance to use third party images within the resources. These images ranged from simple diagrammatic explanations of concepts, to graphs and tables of recent research data."*

Participant 4 said a *"practical challenges of developing OERs may limit the extent to which developing resources for open education is incorporated within the routine workings of higher education institutions."*

*"Some of the examples and learning activities from OER had no direct socio-cultural and pedagogical relevance to the local situations students find themselves in."* (Participant 5).

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that learners undertaking programs through ODL mode, some did not have an idea of OER. Being unaware of OER contributed to no usage of OER. Availability of a variety of learning and teaching resources contributes towards quality learning. Furthermore, Arinto, (2016) says, "…pedagogical change is complex and often challenging not only for individual teachers but also for the DE institution as a whole."

. Most participants indicated that quality can be measured by looking at the skills and performance of the products of distance and open learning institutions. Krelja, (2016:138)says, "the advantages of the usage of Open Educational Resources are manifold. The findings of the study have shown that a wider acceptance of OERs requires development of awareness in both learners and teachers, reaching and understanding of all their dimensions.

Literature concurs with the issue of content divorced from the African realities, they, ..favour the production and use of OER in local languages and diverse cultural contexts to ensure their relevance and accessibility, (Krelja, (2016).

It came out from the literature that, "Spreading of OER in small countries is additionally hindered by their lack of OER implementation policy at national or institutional levels; limited resources and support to customize and create OER," (Torres, 2013).

A policy is a guide that facilitates effective implementation of a programme. All organisations are guided by policy hence the ethical and professional standards are adhered to. There is nowhere one can talk of usage of OER when there is no hard stick. Open education policies are formal regulations regarding support, funding, adoption, and use of open educational resources (OER)).

Data on perception was collected by the researcher and it suggests that learner perceived ODL negatively and this was also established from literature were four studies on perception were reviewed, (Cooney, 2016; Gurung, 2017). The studies examined how students perceived the quality of OER, and whether OER were considered useful, and how effective OER are considered to be as learning tools to a wider community.

The issues that came out during interviews on perceptions suggest that participants' perception about utilisation of OER was positive because a participant indicated that OER is a pillar in any learning environment and it is even important in distance and online learning since these are learners who do most of the work by themselves. From the research findings it appears most of the participants supported the idea that OER helps in achieving quality learning. Institutions have gone out in adopting OER, while the potential users may not be aware of such resources as the findings of my study pointed out. Literature also colluded with the findings by saying, "…others are either reluctant or simply unaware of the existence of OER..

Challenges faced by participants in accessing OER emerged as a theme, the sub themes were internet connectivity, relevance of the teaching learning resources and copyright issues. This is in view that whoever is engaged in developing the resource does not consider the learner needs or level on which the learner is. The findings of the study was that most participants were of the view that most OER were not customised to the local context which is supported by literature.

."The findings from the study raised serious concerns with the nature of the learning activities and tasks in some of the modules where examples and learning activities from OER had no direct socio-cultural and pedagogical relevance to the local situation students find themselves in. It was also found that institutions had challenges in obtaining copyright clearance to use third party images within the resources. ). The other challenge that was established is the dependence on electricity in accessing OER which was also supported by literature which suggested alternative modes such as use of recorded audio on DVD or CD.

It was found that some material on OER may not be compatible with the local traditional knowledge systems. Several participants interviewed raised the issue of compatibility of the OERs. . Most participants interviewed indicated that for meaningful learning to take place in distance and online it calls for thorough preparation.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The teachers' attitude towards ODL students must be positive and supportive. As failure by teachers to be supportive, most students may not be able to make it in their studies. The community should also be positive towards ODL and motivate those learning through ODL so that learners also put value in this mode of study. OER services are costly in developing countries as illustrated in literature review but for quality learning to take place such an investment is necessary. The findings of the study reflect that the use of OER in institutions of higher learning is at an infancy stage and negatively impacts on the provision of quality ODL.

### 6.1 Recommendations

i. The institutional, legal, cultural, technical and individual opportunities and barriers toward wider acceptance, usage, re-usage and creation of OER should be more deeply researched.

ii.  It is recommended that institutions that offer education through the distance mode need to familiarize students with all electronic platforms that are designed to enhance quality education.

iii.  The institution should make a provision for cross-interconnections if students can log in using the BOU provided credentials.

## 6.2  Limitations of the Study

Time can be a limiting factor which might force the researcher to adjust her programme of study. Another limitation is that investigating a single organisation may not provide a clear picture of quality parameters. Purposively selecting participants may not lead to generalizability which is another limiting factor There is consciousness of the limitations of generalizability in the adopted research design. While generalizability is not the purpose of the selected research design, the use of the selected data generation tools such as semi-structured interviews, and observation contributed a lot towards the enhancement of the credibility and transferability of the results of the study..

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