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Open and distance learning: The opportunity of Socio-economic transformation for Zambians

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Abstract

In Zambia, Open and Distance learning (ODL) as an opportunity of socio-economic transformation to citizens has existed for decades but with very little emphasis by the education providers. Despite little emphasis of ODL, this paper argues that it is a viable opportunity of socio-economic transformation for Zambians. . This argument emanates from the background that conventional mode of learning in a classroom has for a long time limited a lot of citizens from acquiring specialised type of education resulting in most sectors of the economy such as Education, Health, Manufacturing, Mining, Engineering, Defence and Security understaffed in Zambia. To address this shortage of specialised work force in Zambia, there is an urgent demand for specialised education. But how can the depleted or scanty levels of human resource leave their work places and go to sit in a classroom for a period ranging from four to six years to obtain a first degree level of education at the expense of providing their critical services required of them their fellow citizens? This question leaves us with no option but to argue that ODL is a viable option or opportunity in addressing the growing demand for education for socio-economic transformation in Zambia. ODL can increase the capacity of education institutions without extensive building of infrastructure by allowing learners the flexibility to remain in their communities or work places. In addition, ODL provides an opportunity to learners who work full-time and who are unable to attend full-time conventional mode of learning to acquire education relevant to their career paths. Education is a tool for socio-economic transformation of societies and countries. Through education societies can acquire right knowledge, skill, values and attitudes that are oriented to transforming their socio-economic lives.

Keywords: open learning, distance learning, socio-economic transformation

1. Introduction

This paper has six parts. These include; introduction which also discusses the definitions of concepts – distance education, correspondence education, continuing education, open and distance education. Introduction is followed by background of the paper, development of open and distance learning, the education policy context in Zambia, open and distance learning as an opportunity of socio-economic transformation for Zambians. Part six covers conclusion and recommendations.

Definitions of key concepts

The paper has adapted and defined the key concepts it has used as follows:

Distance education – is defined by the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, (2012:2) as a *formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to learners who are separated from the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously.* Distance education often incorporates technologies such as the internet; one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, wireless communications devices, audio conferencing, or video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, in conjunction with any of the other technologies.

Similarly, Zambia's Ministry of Education (1996) in its policy on education describes distance education as a form of educational provision in which the learner and teacher are at some distance from each other most of the time. Instruction is provided mainly through the print medium, but supplemented by other media such as radio, television, computer network or residential school.

Continuing education – Ministry of Education, (1996) refers to continuing education as a mode of education delivery parallel to formal teaching provided in school and tertiary level of education. The mode of instruction is face to face contact between the learner and teacher. Teaching takes place during the day, after work, over the weekends or in the evenings.

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Correspondence education – the Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, (2012) states that correspondence education refers to:

- (a) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials to learners who separated from the instructors.
- (b) Interaction between the instructor and learners is limited, is not regular and substantial and is primarily initiated by the learner.
- (c) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced and
- (d) Correspondence education is not distance education.

Open and distance education - The terms *open learning* and *distance education* represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners (UNESCO, 2002). Open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web.

Similarly, Commonwealth of Learning (2000) has defined open and distance learning as a way of providing learning opportunities that is characterized by the separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or both time and place; learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency; the use of a variety of media, including print and electronic; two-way communication that allows learners and tutors to interact; the possibility of occasional face-to-face meetings; and a specialized division of labour in the production and delivery of courses.

These definitions may pose variations in their meanings but what is core is that meanings of words are progressive in nature. For instance, correspondence education evolved to distance education and distance education is evolving to open and distance learning. For this paper, different words are used to explain points in time but it should be put to mind by readers that its thesis is that, open and distance learning provides an opportunity to its consumers for socio-economic transformation.

2. Background

In Zambia, Open and Distance learning (ODL) as an opportunity of socio-economic transformation for Zambians has existed as far as 1940s when many Zambians were studying for post primary qualifications through commercial colleges in South Africa and Britain. When Zambia became independent in 1964, there was a shortage of educated and trained personnel in both the public and the private sector. This prompted the government of Zambia to adopt Open and Distance Learning as a viable strategy to enhance access to education (MESVTEE and VVOB, 2014). However, very little emphasis has been made by the education providers that ODL is ally to socio-economic transformation for citizens. Similarly, MOE (2003:13) states that;

“the opportunities that Open and Distance Learning mode of access can provide has not been fully realised in the past, with only about 600 students catered for by the University of Zambia, and less than 5,000 students enrolled under the Department of Continuing Education in the Ministry of Education. The training of open learning tutors has been

neglected along with provision of appropriate materials, equipment and infrastructure.”

Despite conventional mode of learning in a classroom having for a long time limited a lot of citizens from acquiring specialised type of education resulting in most sectors of the economy such as Education, Health, Manufacturing, Mining, Engineering, Defence and Security being understaffed in Zambia (Central Statistics Office, 2012). To address this shortage of specialised work force in Zambia, there is an urgent demand for specialised education. But how can the depleted or scanty levels of human resource leave their work places and go and sit in a classroom for a period ranging from four to six years to obtain first degree level of education at the expense of providing their critical services required of them by their employers? This question leaves us with no option but to argue that ODL is the answer or opportunity to addressing the growing demand for education.

In addition, the growing population of Zambia creates demand for basic services such as education and health but conventional mode of education delivery has so far not matched with this demand. As a result, the number of illiterate or unqualified personnel is skyrocketing. Additionally, for the majority of the Zambians, their socio-economic well-being continue being poor. Attesting to this fact is the Central Statistics Office, (COS), (2012), which states that Zambia’s population count as captured by the 2010 Census stood at 13,092,666. This was an increase from the population of 9,885,591 captured during the 2000 Census. This represents a 2.8 percent annual rate of population growth during the inter-censal period, 2000-2010. Of the total population enumerated in the 2010 Census, 7,919,216 representing 60.5 percent were in rural areas, while 5,173,450 representing 39.5 percent of the population were in urban areas. The population was broken down into 49.3 percent (6,454,647) males and 50.7 percent (6,638,019) females. Clearly, it can be noted that the majority 60.5 percent of Zambia’s population is in the rural area and it is the same rural area where development including conventional educational infrastructure and facilities are inadequate or lacking.

As a result of the rapid population growth, Zambia may continue to face a challenge in terms of provision of education and later employment opportunities for now and into the future. Concerted effort is therefore, required from all stakeholders in meeting the challenges of this young and growing population. In responding to this challenge, this paper argues that Zambia must aim at emphasising the mode of providing education through ODL if it has to meet the education demand of its population. In this regard, it should be known that an educated population is an asset that can and must be harnessed. However, uneducated population may hinder the much desired socio-economic transformation that the country wants to achieve in its citizens.

3. Development of ODL in Africa

This section focuses on development of open and distance learning in Central and Southern Africa. Since this paper focusses on Zambia, prominence has been highlighted by dedicating a distinct section on development of open and distance learning in Zambia.

Development of ODL in Central and Southern Africa

The background information we are giving here is based on work by Tony Dodds in 2003 titled: “From Government Correspondence schools to Parastatal Colleges of Open Learning: Out of school secondary education at distance in Central and Southern Africa” (Dodds 2003).

We think going through the works of Dodds, gives an insight about the relevance of ODL and the role it plays in socio-economic transformation in society. By the early 1960s, when many of the countries of East, Central and Southern Africa were emerging into independence, correspondence courses were an established way for people whose opportunities for formal schooling had been limited to obtain qualifications that gave them access to jobs or prospects for advancement within their jobs. Many of the first generation of African political leaders and civil servants obtained a significant proportion of their secondary qualifications in this way. The courses were mainly offered by private commercial correspondence colleges from the metropolitan countries, such as Wolsey Hall and British Tutorial College of Britain, International Correspondence Schools of the United States and Rapid Results College of South Africa. This mode of delivering education was heavily criticised that the education delivered was geared towards qualifications in the country where they were based and were often irrelevant to local needs. The learning materials used were often of poor quality, and primarily designed to make profits from drop-outs rather than to advance education in the colonial countries. Many such courses led solely to qualifications of the colleges themselves, which were unrecognized both in the UK and by the colonial authorities in the African countries (Dodds, 2003). These criticisms emerged in Britain, and led to the revolution in distance education which brought about the creation of the National Extension College as a pilot project for an open university.

The new independent governments of African countries recognized the advantages of being able to offer increased educational opportunities in this way. As early as 1964–65 both Malawi and Zambia, encouraged by educators from New Zealand and Australia, set up government correspondence colleges and Southern African sub-region. Most of these colleges were government or university initiatives, and aimed to provide adults, usually working adults including under-qualified primary school teachers, with opportunities to obtain secondary-level of education qualifications. They were established with the encouragement of international educational support agencies such as the Swedish International Development Agency, the University of Wisconsin, the International Extension College of the UK, and of individual Australian and New Zealand distance educators. By 1975 such programmes existed also in Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda. In addition to the correspondence courses on which they were founded, many began to use additional media such as radio and audio cassettes, as well as occasional face-to-face tutorials, in line with developments taking place internationally at the time.

Nearly all these programmes were set up to serve the needs of adults who wished or needed to get qualifications they had been unable to obtain when they were younger and of school going age. During the 1970s, nearly all mentioned countries saw a dramatic increase in the number of students completing primary school without a parallel increase in formal secondary school places (Murphy and Zhiri, 1992). In response, first the Malawi Correspondence College and then the Zambia National Correspondence College were established by their governments to enrol primary school leavers who could not find places in conventional secondary schools, and junior secondary school students who had not done well enough in Junior Certificate exams to win places in senior secondary classes. This opening up to younger students led to huge

increases in enrolments but sadly not to parallel increases in the resources, both financial and personnel, made available to the colleges. Correspondence education, or distance education as it was gradually becoming known, was being promoted by ministries responsible for education as a cheaper alternative to conventional schooling. From the point of view of promoting governments, as long as the chance was there for such youngsters to enter secondary level, the responsibility of providing education to citizens was met. As a result, quality education was not emphasised. If the revolving door threw out almost as many as it let in, that was the fault of the learners, or of their tutors or mentors.

There was recognition later, however, that these younger students needed more support and supervision than their adult fellow students, and in both countries the supervised correspondence study-group became an integral part of the programme. This approach of delivering education was followed in many other countries that had initiated correspondence programmes, especially in Southern African countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe. In the Namibia and Zimbabwe cases, the study groups were organized for students studying in private as opposed to government institutions.

However, in the 1980s economic decline hit the region, and educational budgets suffered seriously (Murphy and Zhiri, 1992). As a result, resources available to distance education institutions compared to all out-of-school programmes, fell sharply. Despite shrinking resources to support this mode of education delivery, many of the institutions did not reduce their enrolment levels but kept the status quo or increased enrolment numbers of students. For political reasons, governments prevented them from limiting student intake, as their reason for existence was to offer an alternative path to the conventional and expensive secondary school education. The result, inevitably, was a decline in the quality of the service offered. It became harder and harder to meet the demand for learning materials and to maintain the level of tutorial support. It was increasingly being recognized that approaches to distance education designed for self-motivated adults, seeking career advancement, were not adequate to meet the needs of adolescents who through no fault of their own were unable to complete their secondary studies at conventional schools (Dodds and Mayo, 1996). But resources were not available to experiment with new methodology for delivering distance education to the adolescents and young adults who were now the majority student body. Staff who were teaching in the conventional full-time secondary schools were transferred to distance education, often with little or no training in delivering distance education. Sadly Dodds and Mayo, (1996) reports that one of the government officials from countries under discussion was heard describing the distance education offered to school leavers as 'education for failures'.

In spite of this growing scepticism among government education officials about the effectiveness and quality of what was being provided, there was a recognition that economic decline in most countries made it impossible to meet the level of demand by replacing these distance teaching bodies with conventional secondary schools. Led by the World Bank, an economic perspective of structural adjustment as the way forward for developing countries was developed. To this effect, several studies showed the cost advantages of distance education provision of out-of-school secondary education (Perraton, 1979; Perraton, 1983; Murphy and Zhiri, 1992; Dodds and Mayo, 1996). While these studies recognized the

problems of quality faced by the institutions, they argued that the approach remained sound, but the structures and services provided by the institutions needed improvement. To do this it required strengthening the professionalism of the personnel and their ability to make decisions on student needs assessment, and providing additional resources needed without jeopardizing their economic advantages. The studies sought ways to strengthen the commitment of governments to this approach, while allowing greater professional autonomy to the institutions in their day-to-day management. Murphy and Zhiri (1992) sum up these arguments as follows; for second-level education the participants recommended that organizations need to have autonomy with regard to staffing, finance and decision-making. At the start-up stage, adequate resources should be provided and attention given to ensuring that the quality of the instructional materials is high and that the public is made aware of the importance and status of distance education. Staff also needed appropriate training in the tasks expected of them.

Given such a background regarding ODL one could still see the role that it plays and also its contribution to the socio-economic transformation of society and it is in this spirit that we see our paper appropriate in addressing the relevance of ODL in our set up and communities around us with the view to empowering the learners to become productive members of society.

Development of open and distance learning in Zambia

Thus, history has it that since Zambia's political independence in 1964, though at a micro level, open and distance learning in Zambia has been used to increase access to education at all levels of the education system. For instance,

(i) Open and distance learning for primary school education:

Need for open and distance learning for primary school education was identified. In order to address this need for primary school education in Zambia, the Directorate of Open and Distance Education of Zambia's Ministry of Education in July 2000, developed alternative primary school education programmes at lower primary (Grades 1-4), upper primary (Grades 5-7), and secondary (Grade 8-12) levels. The alternative lower primary school education programmes were delivered to learners countrywide using Interactive Radio Instruction in community supported learning centres. The programme aimed at reaching out-of-school children who had no basic or primary school education, nor the ability to access the formal school system due to inadequate provision or insufficient facilities, poverty, distance to the nearest formal/government school, increasing parental disinterest in school education, and those impacted by HIV and AIDS pandemic (Kelly, 1998).

There were two main types of IRI schools. These included; pure or original type of centres, which depended entirely on radio lessons and mentors, and community schools using IRI methodology where children learnt by following a radio lesson under the supervision of a mentor. Community schools were owned, financed, and operated by communities for their own children, particularly children in special need such as orphans and those considered vulnerable.

(ii) Secondary school level of distance education

Parallel to the need for primary school education was the need for secondary school education. As noted by Siaciwena and Lubinda (2008), although at a smaller level, in the early 1970s, the Zambia College of Distance Education (ZACODE)

(formerly National Correspondence College) began offering two types of open and distance learning to:

- Directly enrolled adult students studying for junior secondary or General Certificate of Education (GCE) "O" levels (senior secondary school equivalent). In the early 1990s, there were 30,000 such students enrolled.
- Recent primary school leavers in "Open Secondary Classes," who studied in supervised groups at various centres throughout Zambia. In the mid-1990s, approximately 19,000 students were enrolled in these study groups at over 250 centres.

This was a big contribution to the socio-economic well-being of the students by the open and distance learning mode of delivering education. However, due to a number of problems that affected ZACODE, including inadequate funding, which resulted in shortages of learning materials and equipment, costly postage, large class sizes in open secondary centres, lack of qualified staff and cumbersome administrative systems, the open and distance learning programmes grounded to a halt in the 1990s (Tate, 1990).

Zambia's Ministry of Education, through its Directorate of Open and Distance Education revived the distance secondary education programme. As a result, print-based self-instructional materials and learner support systems have been developed for the Alternative Upper Basic (equivalent to junior secondary) and Alternative High School (senior secondary) Programmes. The programmes are targeting potential learners of all age groups who cannot access upper basic or high school education through the conventional school system. As a result, the enrolment figures of children in grade 8 – 12 for open and distance learning increased in 2002 to 35,598 as compared to those of 2001 which were 25,303 (MoE, 2003).

(iii) Open and distance learning opportunities for high school leavers

Due to an increased number of learners completing high school education, there was increased demand for tertiary education too. Unfortunately not all high school leavers accessed tertiary level of education due to limited places. This situation resulted into many of them loitering in streets. In response to this need, the University of Zambia offers degree programmes to both working adults and high school leavers. For instance, Siaciwena and Lubinda (2008) pointed out that during the 2006 academic year, young people of between 18–24 years constituted 10 percent of the total distance education enrollment at the university. This was significant when one considers that in the past university policy restricted distance learning programmes to people of 25 years and above. This is still indeed significant if we can further realise that according to CSO (2012) the country's population consists of 45.5% of people aged below 15 years.

With this shift in policy direction by the University of Zambia, it is possible for school and non-school leavers to complete their education by open and distance learning. The system is however, flexible in a way that it makes it possible for learners to move from one mode of learning to the other, that is, from the conventional system to distance learning and vice versa. Surely, with this flexibility, ODL provides opportunities for socio-economic transformation for Zambians.

4. The education policy context in Zambia

Three key education reforms have taken place in the education system of Zambia. These have been documented in the

Education Reforms of 1977, Focus on Learning of 1992 and the Educating our Future of 1996 policy documents. This paper considers it imperative to include the education policy context in Zambia in its argument of open and distance learning an opportunity for socio-economic transformation for Zambians. An overview of education policies also provides clues to why the status of ODL has been of less emphasis despite being a potential avenue to socio-economic transformation of its consumers.

Education Reform policy of 1977: The first national educational reform policy of 1977 emphasised education as an instrument for personal and national development. Thus, as far as 1977, the Government of the Republic of Zambia in its first education reform of 1977 proposed for ODL known at that time as correspondence education. Correspondence education was considered to be part of continuing education. As a result, discussions and financing of correspondence education was under the umbrella of continuing education. The aim of continuing education in 1977 was to cater for adults or youths who left full-time education or may never had entered it, but wished to engage in education and training by part-time study. As a result, the scope of continuing education was four fold as follows:

- a) Literacy education –this was aimed achieving mastery of basic skills of reading, writing and reckoning in the citizens.
- b) Formal education –it was proposed to be done through part-time study with the aim of providing access to formal education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.
- c) In-service training and workers’ education – In-service training was aimed at increasing understanding, competencies and productivity of persons in employment. Workers’ education on the other hand aimed at enlightening the human resource on labour related matters. Labour education was provided in collaboration with the ministry responsible for labour matters.
- d) Culture and recreational education – it aimed at offering educational programmes such as art, crafts, music, dance, drama, language and sports.

It is gratifying that from inception open and distance learning was proposed and considered for implementation. However, unfortunately the big drawback was inadequate financial resource allocated to this important alley to socio-economic transformation of Zambians. Thus, from the onset at budgeting level, open and distance learning was not budgeted for. This is evidenced from the budgetary statement in the Education Reform of 1977 (MoE, 1977:100) which reads, *“since there will continue to be a large number of school leavers at each terminal point, continuing education should play a major role. However, the bulk of expenditure is on recurrent and not on capital needs because students use whatever education buildings are available. Expenditure will be mainly on Adult Education Centres.”*

As a result of this budgetary statement, out of a national budget of K180.65 million only K0.25 million was allocated and implementation of continuing education was adversely affected.

Focus on Learning Policy of 1992: The second education reform in Zambia was the Focus on Learning of 1992. It emanated from the deterioration of education standards experienced in the first ten years of Zambia’s independence. Thus, the first ten years of Zambia’s independence brought

general massive investments in the education. Very many primary schools, secondary schools tertiary institutions were built and maintained. Quality of education was distinct and Zambians desire was for quantity to enable more people to attain education standards that would help them become socially and economically emancipated.

In 1973, however, Zambia entered the phase of one-party rule. With it came huge bureaucratic party machinery wholly financed by the state. Party functionaries were given sinecures at all levels of state operations and the total annual cost of financing such activities was more than that of education and health put together. This led to a very rapid deterioration in educational services.

In 1990, Zambia attended the World Conference on Education for All and in 1991 it organised its own conference on Education for All and proposed the need to give more priority to primary education in the context of quality and qualitative improvements to the education provided. In the same year, Zambia entered plural politics with a new government. The new government examined the proposals and strategies dubbed focus on learning and made them into an official policy on education in Zambia. Consequently, Focus on Learning policy on education stressed the mobilisation of resources for the development of school education.

Notable achievements existed in relation to continuing education provision. These included the establishing of the Directorate of Continuing Educational programmes with a focus on four main programmes:

- a) Distance Education
- b) Open secondary school for grade 7 school leavers
- c) Evening classes
- d) School for continuing education

There was also increased enrolment brought by these opportunities offered by the Directorate of Continuing Education. For instance out of the targeted 190,000 out of school children, 53, 997 were enrolled in continuing education programmes (MoE, 1992).

However, good as this policy may seem it had its own limitations towards continuing education including correspondence education. For instance, in its policy document, Focus on Learning the Ministry of Education, (1992) points out that its involvement in continuing education was confined to promoting “paraformal” programmes through correspondence courses, evening classes and open secondary and providing legislation on how education in general was to be run. Provision of distance education was not a point of emphasis. The government sought to concentrate on revamping the formal education by not spreading its meagre resources to informal education where distance education or mode of open and distance learning fell in.

Educating Our Future policy of 1996: The third and current policy on education in Zambia is the Educating Our Future of 1996. It derives its title from the belief that it charts direction the education system should take in educating the men and women who will take charge of Zambia’s destiny. It therefore, addresses the entire field of formal institutional education, paying particular attention to democratisation, decentralisation, and productivity on the one hand, and curriculum relevance and diversification, efficient and cost-effective management, capacity building, cost sharing, and revitalised partnerships on the other.

Interestingly, Ministry of Education in the Educating Our Future policy document of 1996 endeavoured to describe the concepts distance education and continuing education. The Ministry’s description of distance education and continuing

education is that there are related (MoE, 1996). As a result, these two concepts were put under the Department of continuing Education. In particular, Ministry of Education describes distance education as a form of educational provision in which the learner and teacher are at some distance from each other most of the time. Instruction is provided mainly through the print medium, but supplemented by other media such as radio, television, computer network or residential school. Distance education depended on the learning materials produced by the National Correspondence College in Luanshya district in the Copperbelt province of Zambia. Continuing education on the other hand refers to a mode of education delivery parallel to formal teaching provided in school and tertiary level of education. The mode of instruction is face to face contact between the learner and teacher. Teaching takes place during the day, after work, over the weekends or in the evenings.

Educating Our Future policy alludes to the fact that the main focus of the distance and continuing education programmes offered was the provision of formal school- type education for those who have not had an opportunity to undertake or complete this. Thus, for many of the students, the programmes provides a second chance to obtain formal qualifications that they were unable to obtain in school. In this way, distance and continuing education provides a route for re-entering the formal system of schools and tertiary institutions. While this was a good contribution by distance and continuing education, a structural problem with the philosophy of this type is the subordination it implies to the formal school system. This could be one of the reasons other people relegate it to education for failures (Dodds and Mayo, 1996)). Additionally, for as long as distance and continuing education aim mostly at providing a second chance to obtain formal qualifications, their potential to provide lifelong education for adults will be constrained.

Educating Our Future policy equally faces limitations due to under-funding, lack of skilled personnel and transport, and inadequate teaching and learning materials. These programmes also suffer from uncoordinated planning. MoE, (1996) points out that although, there was potential for enormous growth in the number of students reached by the programmes, the rapid growth does not exist due to its relegated position of providing second class education, providing second chance to failures and school dropouts. In order to address this problem, this paper acknowledges the policy shift by the University of Zambia to admit school and non-school leavers to distance programmes. In addition, the University of Zambia and a few other tertiary institutions now offer a mode of education delivery known as open and distance learning in which students can enter and complete while at distance. Surely, this is an alternative to limitations posed by limited places in tertiary institutions ending up throwing multitudes of youths in the street without education, a scenario which poses a danger to their socio-economic well-being.

5. Open and Distance learning as an opportunity of socio-economic transformation

Drawing from the Educating Our Future 1996 policy on education and works of various scholars in the field of ODL, we highlight some examples that provide the basis upon which ODL could be seen to be providing the socio-economic transformation. MoE, (1996) in its education policy document, Educating Our Future states that education in Zambia is intended to save individuals' social and economic wellbeing and to enhance the quality of life for all. In this

regard, the goals of education in Zambia include producing a learner capable of:

- (a) being animated by a personally held set of civic, moral and spiritual values,
- (b) developing an analytical, innovative, creative and constructive mind,
- (c) appreciating the relationship between scientific thought, action and technology on the one hand, and sustenance of the quality of life on the other.
- (d) Demonstrating free expression of one's own ideas and exercising tolerance for other people's views.
- (e) Cherishing and safe guarding individual liberties and human rights,
- (f) Appreciating Zambia's ethnic cultures, customs and traditions, and upholding national pride, sovereignty, peace, freedom and independence,
- (g) participating in the preservation of the ecosystems in one's immediate and distant environments,
- (h) maintaining and observing discipline and hard work as the cornerstones of personal and national development.

Similarly, Jenkins (2003) brings to the fore one of the strengths of ODL as its ability to use a wide variety of technologies. Use of varied technologies and methods is inevitable in teaching if we have to capture and sustain attention of learners. In addition, teaching demands a variety of methods from the teacher because learners have individual differences. Different teaching objectives also demand specific teaching methods, as a result, a variety of methods and technologies are necessary.

Nations are also shifting from considering distance education as a second class mode of education delivery that solely aims at giving school drop-out second chance to acquire education. To this effect, Paine (2003) points out that every nation is striving for a world-class education system. This means that many countries are now putting programmes in place that they believe will lead to a fundamental transformation of public education systems and a significant rise in educational standards. In this paper, we see this shift as an opportunity not only meant to bring about fundamental transformation of public education systems but also as an opportunity in bringing the socio-economic transformation to communities.

Jenkins (2003) also points out that school-level open and distance learning is no longer simply an alternative mode of curriculum delivery for two major client groups: school-age children out of school, and adults wanting to catch up with missed schooling. The scope of open and distance learning is seen in the context of not just learning for the sake of it but developed now than ever before to prepare learners that will bring and add value to the well-being of society. It is an area that is expected to enhance socio-economic transformation for people of all ages. It is this new enlarged scope which suggests that the moment has come to re-launch open distance learning in the context of transforming society and well-being of everyone in the community. This is also our belief and argument that ODL is able to provide opportunities for socio-economic transformation for its consumers including Zambians.

We further draw various examples that support our argument. After examining the mission statements of open universities in nine countries including Canada, China, India, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, it was observed that the mission and goals differed in several ways from those of conventional universities. Open universities endeavour to:

- produce more graduates at a lower per student cost
- provide for greater equality of educational opportunity
- provide access to adult students
- provide professional qualifications
- assist in the development and democratization of their respective countries

An analysis of these goals of open universities is that ODL which is their core mark is surely an opportunity for socio-economic transformation for its consumers. For instance, more graduates are produced implying more people with enlightened minds, socially and economically empowered.

Literature further shows that ODL has played a significant role in Asia, especially in providing access to higher education to people in remote areas and for up-grading teacher qualifications (ICODE, 2009). Similarly, Peters (2009) adds that the opportunity offered by the ODL system goes beyond conventional face-to-face education, reducing the obstacles posed by geographic and economic factors. In Indonesia, for example, University of Terbuka (UT) gave one million people the opportunity to access higher education and contributed significantly to the country's efforts to upgrade teachers qualifications. In this regard, even for Zambia, similar results are foreseen. Thus, by embarking on open and distance learning mode of delivering education Zambians may have socio-economic transformation. Thus, the social and economic status of Zambians for example, may go up. They may be knowledgeable people who can easily exploit their resources to make wealth to improve their well-being. Additionally, ODL is an opportunity that leads to socio-economic transformation for Zambians in the following ways: it addresses the need for demand of tertiary education, can increase the capacity of institutions without extensive building of infrastructure, provides an opportunity to learners who work full time and are unable to attend full-time conventional mode of learning to acquire education and the fact that open and distance learning is an educational vehicle, education becomes a tool for socio-economic transformation.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

(a) Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has brought to light points that substantiate the argument that ODL is an opportunity for socio-economic transformation for Zambians.

(b) Recommendations

On the basis of the discussion in this paper and challenges ODL has faced, it is recommended that:

1. Staff seconded to ODL should be trained in ODL mode of education delivery.
2. Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) should increase funding to ODL to enable it meet its demands for quality education and increased enrolments.
3. Emphasis by education providers should be that ODL is an alternative education delivery and not that it exists to provide second chance to school dropouts.
4. Learning institutions such as University of Zambia that offer undergraduate programmes through open and distance learning should also open up for postgraduate programmes.

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