



# **Quality Assurance Practices in Open and Distance Learning Programme at the Institute of Adult Education, Tanzania**

**Shabani Nyaburiri Maijo<sup>a\*</sup> and Karoli John Mrema<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> *Institute of Adult Education, Tanzania.*

<sup>b</sup> *The Open University of Tanzania, Tanzania.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the learners' and tutors' perceptions of quality assurance practices in ODL programme at the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania. The study employed pragmatism research paradigm in which the mixed research approach was utilised. The study employed the sequential exploratory design. The target population were 1400 ODL learners and 187 tutors. The sample comprised 140 ODL learners selected through a simple random sampling technique. Also, a sample of sixty (60) respondents was employed as informants through a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview and questionnaire methods. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS version 23, and the thematic content analysis approach was used to analyse qualitative data. The results revealed that learners had a positive perception of the quality assurance practices in the ODL programme. They were assenting on the quality of the face-to-face, quality of tutors, mode of delivery, timely

\*Corresponding author: Email: [s.maijo2@gmail.com](mailto:s.maijo2@gmail.com);

feedback, and modes of assessment. Tutors had affirmative perceptions of instructional mode, learning outcomes, teaching, and learning as well as assessment procedures. Also, the study revealed the challenges facing the implementation of quality assurance in ODL to be the lack of ODL policy, shortage of funds, lack of ODL experts, and unavailability of ICT facilities at learning centres. The study concludes that learners' and tutors' perceptions are more imperative in maintaining the quality assurance of the ODL programme. It is therefore recommended that institutions need to develop the quality assurance mechanisms that meet the context of the ODL programme. Also, stakeholders should consider the ODL learning environments about formulation of ODL policy and quality assurance normative documents for ODL mode.

*Keywords: Quality assurance; perception; stakeholders; programme; open and distance learning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Quality Assurance (QA) practices are crucial for a successful Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programme. Quality assurance in ODL has always been a universal concern for stakeholders [1]. However, as Open and Distance Learning (ODL) becomes a recognised educational programme and mode of delivery, stakeholders have increased interest in understanding its quality assurance process and procedures [2]. Therefore, setting priorities for quality assurance in ODL is a fundamental strategy for enhancing learners', tutors', and institutional academic performance.

Quality has been a major importance for higher education [1-2], and the provision of quality higher education is a major challenge to be addressed by ODL institutions [3]. This study attempts to investigate the implementation of quality assurance practices in ODL institutions. As many higher learning institutions embrace ODL programme in delivering education contents, and as new quality assurance methods arise, ODL institutions also should adapt to new techniques of assuring quality to meet the expectations of stakeholders [1]. This study aims to reveal the quality assurance practices and challenges facing the implementation of quality assurance in open and distance learning (ODL) programme at the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania.

The meaning of quality and quality assurance has been widely debated, and the purpose of incorporating the ODL mode of learning in higher education is to increase access to education, fulfill the diverse needs of stakeholders, and provide quality education to a vast group of learners at a minimal cost [4]. The increase of learners opting ODL mode of learning also has alerted stakeholders to query about the quality of

education provided through ODL programme [2-4].

Quality assurance practices in ODL programme enables stakeholders to increase their trust to promote the mode of delivery. The study conducted by Jung & Latchem, [5] and Shah & Jarzbkowski, [6] indicated that quality assurance in ODL has been deemed effective in Europe and in some Asian countries including China, Malaysia and Japan. Nevertheless, the situation has been noted to be contrary in the Sub-Saharan region where stakeholders have continued to question whether the education provided via ODL mode is worthwhile or not. In this regard, the findings of this study are expected to enhance the understanding of the theory and practices of quality assurance in ODL and to contribute to quality improvement of ODL programme [1].

It is significant to note that the stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, in understanding of ODL programme may affect the quality of the education programme. Quality assurance in ODL has been a field of study that has dominated educators and stakeholders in the several past years [1-2]. Besides, the learning atmosphere of ODL programme varies significantly from the traditional face-to-face learning when it comes to the learners' support, motivation, satisfaction, and interaction, hence the quality of learning can rest on the level of interaction, material access, and efficiency of learning [7].

Open and distance learning is a unique method of learning since instructions and learning take place in an environment where the tutors and learners are geographically remote from each other most of the time. It presents an innovative and effective cost-effective means of delivering training [8]. However, the growth of ODL programme in different countries including Tanzania has increased access to education and

greatly brought flexibility of learning in higher education institutions [9].

As it has been difficult to comprehend the meaning of quality and quality assurance in ODL, the meaning of quality assurance can mean different things to different stakeholders. Quality assurance is an approach in managing quality and focuses on management actions [1-4]. It aims to apply agreed procedures and to attain defined standards as a matter of routine [5]. Quality assurance can be adopted as an effective methods and tools to respond the challenge of quality in ODL programme. Quality assurance is not an effort to create quality, but rather a systematic and comprehensive effort to the improvement of quality [5].

Moreover, it has been indicated that quality assurance in ODL programme is relatively new in Sub-Saharan Africa [10]. This truth indicates that the quality of distance learning in developing countries is still at an infant stage. Learners enrolled in ODL programme, have different educational backgrounds, intentions, and needs [11]. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the late 1980s marked the evolution of quality assurance in higher education [12]. In 2005, the East African Quality Assurance Framework (EAQAF) and the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA) issued a resolution to promote quality assurance activities in Eastern African region.

The purpose was about information sharing on quality standards, benchmarks, and best practices for the traditional mode of delivery. Still, the quality assurance in ODL has received minimal attention. The institutions offering education through ODL mode have been regarded as second-chance institutions. The quality assurance implementation in ODL programme have not also evolved to respond the learners' needs and technological changes [13]. Developers of open and distance learning programme should be thoughtful of how interested parties perceive and react to the elements of quality assurance [14].

The quality of ODL programme usually differs in access to education [15] and labour market demand [16]. The increases of students enrolled in higher education globally is forecast to be more than double by 2025, to 264 million. This increase will demand higher institutions to adopt some forms of ODL programme to improve education access and equity. The question that comes up every time is whether the quality of

ODL should be assessed by using the same criteria of conventional or should be assessed differently [17]. Dobbs and Waid-Lindberg [18] stated that the quality of traditional conventional education is not as great as it is in ODL due to its differences in terms of mode of delivery. As a result, there is limited systematic evidence and consensus across the region on the QA practices in ODL.

In the year 2014/15, the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) experienced an increased number of learners who had to access tertiary education through ODL programme. The institute adopted ODL programme alongside the traditional programme as an innovative way of training learners who could not attend on-campus training because of various factors including the cost of learning, marital status, and work. The IAE has implemented an internal quality assurance policy and guidelines as a means of ensuring quality in education provision. This policy serves as a measure of the quality assurance process.

To improve the quality of education provision, the IAE has established the internal quality assurance policy and implementation guidelines as the measures of quality assurance. Despite the effort made by the institution to improve the quality of study materials, learner support services, assessment, staffing, and conducting face-to-face sessions for supporting learners' performance. The quality assurance policy and guidelines have more focused on traditional face-to-face programme than ODL programmes [19].

The situations have continued to raise concerns about the practices of quality assurance in the ODL programme. The major concern has closely related to learner support, learning infrastructures, and competency of graduates. Therefore, this study investigated the stakeholders' perception of the quality assurance practices in open and distance learning programme at the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania.

## 1.1 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do the tutors perceive the quality assurance practices in ODL programme at the Institute of adult education?

2. What are the learners' perceptions on the quality assurance practices in the ODL programme at the Institute of Adult Education?
3. What are the challenges facing the implementation of quality assurance in ODL for higher learning institutions in Tanzania?

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study was grounded on the stakeholders' theory. The theory proposes that companies produce externalities that affect several parties, both internal and external to the firm [20]. The stakeholders differs in their expectations and satisfaction. The interest of stakeholders' on the quality of ODL has become increasingly [9]. The implication of the theory in this study was based on the assumption that quality begins with inner self and is the multidimensional process [1-2]. Based on the theory, stakeholders possesses distinct needs and expectations, and they can provide constructive feedback that benefits the organization. Stakeholders' perspectives and levels of satisfaction are imperative in the quality in open and distance learning programmes.

In Europe, educational institutions have established a parallel quality assurance framework for both ODL and conventional learning methods to improve the quality of ODL programme [19]. In Africa, more efforts of quality assurance have been placed on conventional programme than ODL. Also, there is a feeling that ODLs are not as good as those in conventional learning. The stakeholders in ODL programme is more anxious about course design, materials, and learner support services [4] the relevancy of assignments [1-2] clear instructions related to grading policy, feedback, and competitiveness in the workplace [9].

The United States has conducted a study that identified three meta-dimensions which are crucial in determining the quality assurance of open and distance learning (ODL). These dimensions are trust and engagement, which are crucial in shaping the perceptions of top administrators; aptitude, infrastructure, and accessibility, which are essential for learners and tutors; and the third dimension, which is dominated by reliable interactions, self-efficacy, trust, and institutional commitment among tutors and learners. These dimensions have been

identified as critical in ensuring the quality of ODL programmes [18].

Zuhairi, Karthikeyan, and Priyadarshana [20] conducted the study at the two universities in Sri Lanka and Indonesia and revealed the challenges of the quality assurance system in ODL that were are designed by the people who come mostly from campus-based institutions with little understanding of the principles of good practice of ODL.

The learners' perceptions of distance education in Portugal, UAE, and Ukraine was conducted by [4] and the results revealed that learners' had a positive perceptions of the programme. Also, studies described the challenges that face ODL institutions in assuring quality, Jung and Latchem [5] revealed the vital constraints that the institutions are likely to encounter were to be the lack of ODL policy, inadequate study materials, learners' dropout rate, and limited access to internet facilities. Another challenge was the lack of agreement on whether the standards used to determine quality in conventional systems can be used the same as used in ODL.

The practices of QA in ODL are not universal [21] because the learning environment is not the same from institution to institution and country to country. In Bangladesh, the perceptions and challenges of quality assurance practices were based on three aspects: people, place, and programme of the institution [22]. The positive impact of QA practices was evidently in improving the performance of students and supporting staff in the institution [22].

The study conducted by Maphosa, Mthethwa-Kunene, and Rugube [23] to explore the stakeholders' perceptions and challenges of quality provision in ODL, indicated the positive feelings of stakeholders on the quality assurance practices in ODL regardless of the constraints faced. The perceptions were based on but not limited to curriculum, quality of learning materials, and lack of funds, face-to-face, examination management, regulative and normative drivers, and learner support services.

Aisyah, Samsiyah, Wulandari & Juliana [4] described that ODL institutions tends to pay attention to the quality of inputs than outputs [24]. For that reason, the study investigated the learners' and tutors' perception of stakeholders on the quality assurance practice for ODL

programme that stakeholders can improve the quality of ODL.

While little is known about the learners' and tutors' perceptions of the quality assurance practices in the ODL programme, thus the study sought to fill in the research gap by investigating the quality assurance practices in the ODL programme by drawing experience from the Institute of Adult Education in Tanzania.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted sequential exploratory design. Sequential exploratory design combine qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in a sequence phase [25]. In this study, the design was utilised in collecting the qualitative data followed by quantitative data in phases [26].

#### 3.2 Population and Sampling

The study targeted a population of 1400 ODL learners who were registered in the 2022/2023 academic year and 187 tutors (academic staff). These included ODL learners, tutors, quality assurance unit, campus managers, leaners and coordinators. The population included in the study due to their background knowledge and experience on quality assurance practices and ODL programme. The sample comprised 140 ODL learners and 60 tutors through simple random sampling and purposively sampling techniques.

#### 3.3 Instruments

The study employed structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions and semi-structured interview to collect data from the field. The questionnaires with a Likert scale of five points were distributed to all categories of respondents. Moreover, interview schedule was conducted with tutors. The purpose was to gather comprehensive qualitative data through in-depth analysis. The study used the period of two months from December 2023 to January 2024 to distribute and collect questionnaires from respondents. The interview was conducted with key informants. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data based on the research design. Similarly, interviews was conducted via face-face interactions and recorded using diaries.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative items were analysed using the thematic analysis approach based on Clarke and Braun's (2013) six step data analysis process. The thematic analysis approaches attempt to identify, analyze, interpret, and report themes within data [25]. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

#### 3.5 Validity and Reliability

To determine the validity of the instruments in this study, the questionnaire was pretested to a sample of 30 respondents and their feedback was included to improve the tool. The questionnaires were pretested to determine the face and content validity of the instruments. The trustworthiness of qualitative data was assured through credibility and dependability. Moreover, the credibility of qualitative findings was assured through triangulation methods and member checks, while dependability was ensured through the data analysis procedures employed in this study. Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient of 0.7 was used to determine the reliability of quantitative data.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion on the data collected from the field. The analysis of results is organized into demographic details of respondents and then analysis of results based on analysis of research questions.

#### 4.1 Demographic Details of Respondents

The demographic details of respondents included sex, educational level, age group, and working experiences. The analysis as indicated in Table 1 revealed that 134 (67%) of respondents were female as compared to male 66(33%). Bali & Liu (2018) disclosed that in most cases the ODL programme attracts more females than males probably due to either family responsibilities or flexibility of learning. Regarding education level, the results show that 80(40%) had a certificate, 60(30%) had a diploma education, 40(20%) had a bachelor's degree, whereas only 10% had a postgraduate education. Respondents, 112(56%) were aged between 30 and 40 years, 60(30%) were aged between 41 and 50 years, while 28(14%) had 50+ years old. With regard to

working experience, the results revealed that 27(45%) had 11-20 years of working experience, 15(25%) had 1-5 years, 14(23%) had 6-10 years and 4(6%) had more than 20 years.

**Research Question 1:** How do the tutors perceive the quality assurance practices in ODL programme at the Institute of Adult Education?

The results as indicated in Table 2 revealed that the majority of the respondents had a positive perception of the quality assurance practices in ODL mode as 50% strongly agreed and 41.6% agreed. This implies that tutors had a positive perceptions on the quality assurance of the ODL programme since learners were satisfied with the services provided. Qualitative data, however, revealed that respondents had diverse sentiments on the quality of the ODL programme.

With connection to this, one of the respondents reported that;

*‘To me, the ODL programme is suitable for learners who cannot undertake the campus-based training, it satisfies their needs... hence, learners who are taking their studies through this mode of delivery can positively test the quality of education when the programme is properly managed.’*

The study also indicated that respondents had a negative perception of the quality assurance of the ODL programme as they were not comfortable with the availability of internet services at the learning centre. Additionally, the research uncovered that the scarcity of ICT resources hinders the success of open and distance learning (ODL) programme.

This means that institutions need to improve internet connectivity for the enhancement of the quality of the ODL programme. Dobbs and Waid-Lindberg [18] established that the quality of ODL is attained when stakeholders are satisfied with the services provided. Thus, the analysis means that the availability of ICT facilities could improve the quality of ODL.

The perception of tutors of the quality of the ODL programme was also measured in terms of learning outcomes and the results show that 25% of respondents strongly agreed, and 33.3% agreed with the statement that achieving the learning outcomes enhances the quality of ODL programme.

The following outcome aligns with the findings of [14], which highlights the significance of quality assurance in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to improve the satisfaction of stakeholders with the learning outcomes.

**Table 1. Demographic details of respondents**

Variable	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Sex (n=200)	Female	134	67
	Male	66	33
	Total	200	100
Education level (n=200)	Certificate	80	40
	College/Diploma	60	30
	Bachelor degree	40	20
	Postgraduate	20	10
	Total	200	100
Age in years (n=200)	30-40 years	112	56
	41-50 years	60	30
	50 + years	28	14
	Total	200	100
Experiences (n=60)	1-5 years	15	25
	6-10 years	14	23
	11-20 years	27	45
	20 + years	4	6
	Total	60	100

**Table 2. Tutors' perceptions of QA practices in ODL programme**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Quality of ODL is to be satisfied with the programme and services provided	30(50%)	25(41.6%)	5(8.3%)	-	-
Quality in ODL is about achieving learning outcomes	15(25%)	20(33.3%)	10(16.6%)	9(15%)	6(10%)
Quality in ODL is perceived as effective teaching and learning	25(41.6%)	15(25%)	5(8.3%)	10(16.6%)	5(8.3%)
Tutors have been engaged in curriculum design and review	18(30%)	25(41.6%)	6(10%)	15(25%)	6(10%)
I have been engaged in coordinating ODL	11(18.3%)	23(38.3%)	8(13.3)	14(23.3%)	4(6.6%)
I have been engaged in quality assurance processes	21(35%)	23(38.3%)	2(3.3%)	10(16.6%)	4(6.6%)
I have been engaged in teaching and marking of assignments for ODL learners	40(66.6%)	20(33.3%)	-	-	-
There are adequate learning infrastructures and support services for the ODL programme	8(13.3%)	7(11.6%)	3(5%)	18(30%)	24(40%)

However, the qualitative data revealed that respondents had different views on the quality of ODL regarding learning outcomes. One of the respondents revealed that the “quality of ODL programme is not the same as a conventional programme because seminar presentation is not practical for ODL learners”.

The tutors' perception on the quality assurance practices in ODL was presented in terms of effective teaching and learning. The results show that 41.6% of respondents strongly agreed and 25% agreed with the statement. Hence, it is evident that the quality of ODL programme exists where there is effective teaching and learning.

The study analysis unveiled a favorable perspective regarding the tutors' involvement in the evaluation of educational resources and assessing the students' work, with 41.6% of the participants expressing strong agreement and 25% agreeing with the statement. This implies that tutors' engagement in curriculum review and marking of students assignments creates impact on quality improvement of ODL programme. The study conducted by [24] asserted that quality assurance in ODL should consider; active engagement and interaction, effective course design, and learner support.

The learning infrastructures and other support services in the ODL programme were perceived to be a challenge. The qualitative data from one of the tutors indicated that ODL centres had no adequate learning facilities like internet, physical and ICT infrastructures”. This exhibits that the majority of respondents had a negative perception of the availability of learning infrastructures and other learner support services. This result was supported by [1] who stated that the dominant restrictions that lead to A negative perception of the quality of ODL is the deficiency of study materials, learners' dropout rate and limited access to the internet services.

**Research Question 2:** What are the learners' perceptions on the quality assurance practices in ODL programme at the Institute of adult education?

The results as indicated in Table 3 revealed that the majority 60% of respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that face-to-face sessions meet learners' expectations. It was further revealed that 55.7% strongly agreed and 28.5% agreed that assessment procedures were evidently for ODL learners. Dobbs and Waid-Lindberg [18] established that the quality assurance in ODL had to meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders. In the same vein, it was discovered that 57.4% strongly agreed and 28.5% agreed that facilitators provide effective and timely

feedback to the students. This finding was in line with Bignoux and Sund [27] that feedback received from the tutor in distance education plays a vital component in the success of the learners. Thus, the provision of effective feedback attracts learner's readiness and enhances the quality of the programme. Also, the content of the module was generally perceived to be effective and satisfies the needs of learning as 35.7% strongly agreed 28.5% agreed with the statement while 24.9% disagreed with the statement. This implies that attaining the quality of ODL programme requires a multidimensional approach and the content of the programme should be designed to suit the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

The study revealed the learners' perception on the quality of the examination as 64.2% disagreed and 35.7% strongly disagreed with the statement that quality is enhanced in the examination process. The analysis implies that learners had a negative perception on the quality of examination provided in ODL programme. On the other hand, the results correspond with Maijo [28] that learners in the ODL programme were dissatisfied with examination questions since they seemed be not aligning with the module content. Qualitative data conversely found that learners were also dissatisfied with how examination queries were handled. The analysis also established that the quality of tutors meets the needs of learners whereas 35.7% strongly agreed, and 21.4% agreed with the statement. The implication of this result is that respondents had a positive perception of the quality of tutors of the ODL programme.

Also, this result corresponds with [29] that the quality of tutors in the ODL programme is a significant tool for enhancing the quality of learners' performance. On the other hand, minority of respondents (21.4%) disagreed, 14.2% strongly disagreed and 7.1% were neutral about the quality of tutors about learners needs.

With regard to the availability of the internet and other ICT facilities in the learning centre, 28.5% strongly disagreed and 25% disagreed with the statement. This means that the majority of respondents (53.5%) were not comfortable with the availability of the internet and other ICT facilities at the learning centres. In the past study, [29] found that the quality of ODL is generally impressed by the type of ICT facilities offered, time, and learners' profile. In contrast, the study established that 17.8% strongly agreed, 7.1% agreed and 21.4% were neutral with the statement. This suggests that learners were very anxious about the availability of the internet and other ICT facilities in the learning centre. The study also revealed the learners' perception about the relevance of the mode of delivery whether meets the needs of learners. The result indicates that 25% strongly agreed, and 28.5% agreed that the mode of delivery is relevant and whether it meets the needs of the learners.

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges facing higher learning institutions in implementing the quality assurance in ODL programme in Tanzania?

**Table 3. Learners' Perception of the Quality Assurance Practices in ODL**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Face to face meet learners' expectations	84(60)	56(40%)			
Assessment provided are clear to learners	78(55.7)	40(28.5)	-	22(15.7)	-
Facilitators provide effective and timely feedback to the students	80(57.4)	40(28.5)	5(3.5)	10(7.1)	5(3.5)
Learners are comfortable with the contents of the module and satisfies the needs of learning	50(35.7)	40(28.5)	15(10.7)	20(14.2)	15(10.7)
Quality is enhanced in the examination process	-	-	-	90(64.2)	50(35.7)
The quality of tutors meet the learners needs	50(35.7)	30(21.4)	10(7.1)	30(21.4)	20(14.2)
Internet and other ICT facilities are available in the learning centre	25(17.8)	10(7.1)	30(21.4)	35(25)	40(28.5)
The mode of delivery is relevant and meets the needs of learners	35(25)	40(28.5)	30(21.4)	20(14.2)	15(10.7)



**Table 4. Challenges Facing the Implementation of Quality Assurance in ODL**

Challenges of QA in ODL	Frequencies (N)	Percentages (%)
Organizational culture	38	19
Inadequate funds from the government	43	21.5
Lack of ODL experts	40	20
Lack of ODL policy	45	22.5
Leadership	34	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The study question sought to determine the challenges facing the higher learning institutions in implementing quality assurance in ODL programme. The results as indicated in Table 4 show that 45(22.5%) of respondents indicated the absence of ODL policy, and 40(20%) revealed the lack of ODL experts. This finding implies that the programme failed to maintain the quality of ODL programmes due to an absence of ODL policy and lack of ODL personnel.

This results correspond with the study Seyfried and Pohlenz [29] which found that many of the ODL institutions in Sub-Saharan region have been encountered with an absence of ODL policy and a degree of understanding the quality assurance activities. In the same vein, Zuhairi Raymundo and Mir [1] revealed that the skill levels and experience of the staff may tremble the provision of quality in ODL programmes [30]. Therefore, an absence of ODL policy and lack of ODL experts poses challenges in implementing quality in ODL programme.

Furthermore, the results exposed that 43(21.5%) of respondents called the inadequate of funds, 38(19%) revealed the organization culture while 34(17%) indicated the leadership style as the challenges facing the institution in implementing quality assurance practices in the ODL programme [31]. This finding infers that a deficit of funding creates a questionable condition for the quality of distance learning programme.

The literatures indicates that the practices of quality assurance in ODL programme is faced by the lack of funding, managerial skills, and the leadership skills. In contrast, the qualitative results established that although the ODL policy encounters the institutions in attaining quality of the programme but another challenge is that the assessment model of ODL differs from that of conventional programme [18]. The findings were also presented through qualitative data. One of the respondents indicated that 'lack of capacity building training for facilitators, deprived

arrangement of learning materials, communication barriers between management and implementer hamper the quality assurance in ODL'. For example, during the interview, one of the respondents said; "content of the modules is of low quality, for example, Entrepreneurship skills and 'Basics of Research' for NTA Level 5 & 6 lacks clarities in content".

The study also presented the challenges facing the quality of ODL based on the Student Academic Records and Information System (SARIS), the respondents indicated that "the system is experienced with 'incomplete outputs' of learners' assignments and examination scores. Kanwar et al., [32] indicted that ODL programme are faced with endogenous and exogenous challenges.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the majority of respondents had a positive perception of the quality assurance practices of the ODL programme. They were impressed with the quality of face-to-face, assessment and the content of the modules. They were also comfortable with the quality of the programme due to the fact that they were satisfied with the ODL programme. Tutors also had a positive perception of their engagement in curriculum review and teaching. Further, the study concludes that quality assurance practices in ODL programme faced with diverse challenges including the absence of ODL policy, lack of funds, lack of ODL experts' organizational culture, and leadership style. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders' perception of the quality assurance practices in ODL should be studied by using numerous approaches to understand more about the implementation of quality assurance in ODL programme. The findings of this study should inform the programme developers and policymakers on how to design and implement the ODL programme based on the needs and expectations of

stakeholders. Also, the higher learning institutions offering education through ODL mode need to collaborate with stakeholders on the best practices of developing the ODL policy and quality assurance framework.

### DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Authors hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts. The authors have acknowledge all cited sources in the reference list.

### CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethics is generally a set of moral principles about what is right or wrong, proper or improper White, (2005) Respondents in this study were asked for their consent to participate in the study. In the data collection process, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) pointed out that anonymity and confidentiality are the rights to individuals' privacy. Therefore, respondents participated in this study voluntarily.

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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