

CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING, A RESPONSE TO SOCIETY NEEDS: A CASE STUDY OF KWAME NKURUMAH UNIVERSITY IN KABWE, ZAMBIA

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Abstract: The working class who need to further their education, upgrade their qualifications in order to acquire new knowledge which can improve their lives and benefit their communities are deterred from advancing in their studies as they cannot leave their work unattended to. Every worker has the right to acquire new knowledge in order to respond better to the needs of a given society(<https://books.google.co.zm>)

Education as an equalizer is a process of teaching, training and improving one's taste is needed by almost every worker but sometimes circumstances cannot allow for each and every worker to go for full-time training because of space, time and other commitments. For instance a serving teacher or a working class person who need to upgrade or further his or her studies on a full-time basis, cannot leave her or his work unattended to due to the nature of their positions or staffing levels. In some situations affected workers are told to choose between their job and studies. In other cases, a worker can even be asked to resign if he or she has to go for further studies. This scenario impedes capacity building at all levels of human endeavour. For this reason, capacity building for the working class through open and distance learning is of great importance. Therefore, this paper looks at how capacity building for the working class through open and distance learning can be a response to the needs of society. The study also used a face to face interviews to specific beneficiaries of the link between Kwame Nkrumah University and the industry.

Keywords- Capacity building, society, ODL, working class.

I. INTRODUCTION

Capacity building is defined as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in the fast-changing world

(www.businessdictionary.com). To mitigate the plight of the serving teachers/workers who cannot manage to upgrade themselves for lack of going on study leave, Kwame Nkrumah University had to introduce distance learning programs to meet the need of these workers. The workers could now learn through distance without disturbing their work. They are able to acquire new qualifications, new knowledge which can improve their lives and benefit their communities without leaving their work unattended to. Kwame Nkrumah University started first with diploma programs in 1998 to allow those workers with certificates to upgrade to diploma then in 2009, Kwame Nkrumah University introduced degree programs to respond and allow those workers with diplomas, advanced diplomas to upgrade to degree level. And in 2018, Nkrumah University introduced postgraduate programs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Different scholars have carried out researches on the capacity building for the working class through open and distance learning or on linking Higher Education to Industry or private sector.

Our colleges and universities must prepare us to the tasks out there in our communities. The higher education should help us to be equal to the tasks of the growing and changing needs in our society. This is a challenge which requires that our institutions of higher learning should really look at the needs of our society and how they can attend to them. (items.ssrc.org)

In order to respond better to the needs of different groups within society, colleges and universities must engage in a meaningful dialogue with stakeholders. Universities or colleges which do not commit themselves to open and mutually beneficial collaboration with other economic, social and cultural partners will find themselves academically as well as economically marginalized (Davies, 1998). Moreover, the UNESCO's framework for priority Action for change and Development of Higher Education (1998) has stated that

governments and policy makers should: Develop innovative schemes of collaboration between institutions of higher education and different sectors of society to ensure that higher education and research programs effectively. (<https://books.google.co.zm>)

Calvert (1986), suggests that open and distance learning helps extend the market for education to Clientele who have not been previously served. He further observes that the problem of unsatisfied demand for education versus actual supply of educational services contributed to the acceptance, growth, and implementation of distance education programs in Nigeria as means to bridge the gap between demand and supply.

Colleges and universities are asked by a new set of regional actors and agencies to make an active contribution to the development of these regions. These demands are driven, amongst other things, by processes of globalization and regionalization or localization in economic development, whereby the regional (or local) environment is as relevant as the national macroeconomic situation in determining the ability of enterprises to compete in the national, supra-national and global economies. Higher education institutions have always contributed to the social and cultural development of the places in which they are located (European journal of Education, vol.35, No.4,200).

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As the Government and Private Sector are in the process of upgrading the status of these education institutions, the serving working class is rendered under-qualified with their certificates and diplomas. Therefore, his workforce needs to abridge to the degree level through capacity building,, hence this current study.

IV. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this study are to examine how the capacity building for the working class through open and distance learning at Kwame Nkrumah University can be of great importance in responding to the society needs by developing individuals and their communities. Therefore, the question: is linking Higher Education to industry/private sector a better response to the needs of different groups within society?

V. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A face to face structured interviews were conducted to specific beneficiaries of the link between Kwame Nkrumah University and the Industry/Private sector. A total of 41 participants were interviewed and

responded and among them: 10 respondents were teachers/students (in-service teachers). 10 respondents were teachers and graduates from Kwame Nkrumah University. 5 respondents were head teachers from secondary schools where these teachers/students came from. 10 respondents were pupils from schools where these teachers/students came from. 1 respondent was a soldier. 2 respondents were bankers. 1 respondent was a soccer coach. 1 respondent was a missionary and 1 respondent was a business man/fashion designer.

Looking at the need for diploma in education at that time, in 1998 Kwame Nkrumah introduced through distance learning the program which helped many in service teachers to upgrade from certificate to diploma. And in 2009 with higher demand of teachers teaching senior classes in our secondary schools, Kwame Nkrumah introduced the degree program as a response to these in service teachers with diplomas to acquire higher qualifications in order to teach senior classes.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ten (10) teachers/students in their case, ODL is the key to human development and progress and it has helped in the development of capacity building. They also observed that open and distance learning has a positive impact to the developments of individuals and their committees. They further noticed that through ODL they are able to study with Nkrumah University without disturbing their work (teaching) in their schools and leave their pupils unattended to.

The five (5) head teachers said the ODL is a solution to so many challenges they used to face with a good number of teachers going for further studies on full-time basis and on study leave, paralyzing the teaching in schools by creating a shortage of manpower needed to attend to all pupils. If the only teacher in that particular subject went for further studies, that subject is abolished at that school. They further observed that with ODL, teachers are able to upgrade their qualifications without going on study leave as this privilege was only for a few fortunate teachers. Other teachers were left with lower qualifications because they could not all go on study leave. Some schools have been upgraded because of the newly graduated work force.

Furthermore, the current study revealed that all the headteachers interviewed were in those positions after upgrading through ODL.

For the ten (10) pupils, they praised the ODL arrangement, saying that there are no disturbances in the school programs because their teachers are able to attend to them as well as upgrading their

qualifications. At no time that they go without a teacher attending to them.

[5] www.businessdictionary.com (11:30).
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The soldier, the soccer coach, the missionary and the business/fashion designer came specifically for French which is offered under the school of humanities and social sciences because it is cardinal in their operations.

The two (2) bankers are doing some programs under the school of business studies, but the only challenge these people are facing is that they are not teachers and they only need French and business studies to help them in their fields but they are forced to do also teaching because this is the design of the Nkrumah University programs. If

V. CONCLUSION

In order to respond to the needs of the workers wishing to upgrade their qualifications without leaving their works unattended to, Kwame Nkrumah University introduced Open and Distance Learning as a response to these workers concern(s). The workers are now able to learn through this program without disturbing their works and acquire higher qualifications to meet the needs of the fast-changing world.

For instance, the ten (10) teachers who graduates from Kwame Nkrumah for them, through ODL, they managed to upgrade their qualifications without disturbing their work. Their newly acquired knowledge is also been appreciated by their supervisors, pupils and the society at large.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Since not everyone out there amongst the workforc is a teacher, Nkrumah can think of redesigning some programs to fit the needs of those who are not wishing to become teachers but just want to do or take some courses they need in their fields, it will be a good response to society needs. For instance, Nkrumah should think of introducing short courses in French for specific purpose(s) like French for peace keeping, French for business, interpretation, translation and so on.

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