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Open and Distance Learning Enablement Through Resource Mobilization

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Abstract: As the emphasis of education for all and literacy gains momentum throughout the world, the demand for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has also increased more especially with orientation to promote life-long learning (LLL). The delivery of education through ODL methodologies needs enablers in terms of appropriate resources for it to be effective. This paper acknowledges the challenge of resource constraints faced by many ODL institutions more especially institutions in poor, developing and middle income countries around the world. The paper further acknowledges the need for sufficient resources for ODL institutions to be effective in their operations. The main focus of this paper is therefore to look at different strategies that can be adopted to mobilize needed resources for ODL institutions. The paper used desktop research methodology and personal experience of the core author as she was a member of the resource mobilization committee for the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) currently transformed to Botswana Open University. The resource mobilization strategies discussed in this paper include, Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Domestic Resource Mobilization, Use of Business Methods, Diversification of Line of Business, Expanding the Donor Base, Involving Individuals, International Partnerships, Government Intervention, learning from NGO fund raising strategies and other innovative resource mobilization strategies. The paper recommends that resource mobilization policies, national and regional ODL policies and strategies should be put in place as part of ODL education enablers. It further recommends the need to incorporate resource mobilization strategies into the overall business strategy and that there should be a strong emphasis on ODL advocacy and the engagement of resource mobilization experts.

Key words: open and distance learning, enablement, resource mobilization

1. Introduction

We often have good ideas, excellent written policies, programmes, organizational strategies and well-written projects but implementation is always a problem. What is often missing in institutions or organizations to successfully implement policies, programmes and strategies is lack of, amongst other things, both organizational and workforce enablement. In an enabled institution, employees are effectively matched to positions to ensure that their skills and abilities are put to optimal use. Likewise, enabled organisations have the essential resources, information, technology, tools and equipment, human resources and financial support to get the job done. Unfortunately, many organisations are not enabled (SADC, 2010). Similarly, Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

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is a good initiative at least in paper, but for its implementation to be successful it needs adequate resources. The quality of outputs and outcomes in education highly depends on the quality of resources used. Outputs and outcomes may include teaching, research, educational programmes and learning whereas inputs are the resources used. The growth of ODL institutions in developing countries is severely constrained by lack of resources, more especially to develop the education infrastructure required for ODL institutions (SADC, 2010). This paper provides a framework for resource mobilization that can be used by ODL institutions to fulfil their mandates. Amongst other initiatives, this paper discusses the following resource mobilization strategies that are essential at enabling ODL institutions; Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Domestic Resource Mobilization, Use of Business Methods, Diversification of Line of Business, Expanding the Donor Base, Involving Individuals, International Partnerships, Government Intervention, learning from NGO fund raising strategies and other innovative resource mobilization strategies. The paper provides the background, methodology used, framework of resource mobilization, discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Background

As a result of both developed and developing countries efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) there is an increasing demand for tertiary education across the world (SADC, 2013). Open and Distance Learning (ODL) has gained popularity due to a limited access in traditional face-to face education. ODL is seen in today’s modern world as an alternative to the conventional system of education. This has led to an increasing demand of ODL programmes and subsequent increase in the number of ODL institutions such as Open Universities and Colleges of Open and Distance Learning in both the public and private sectors. The demand for tertiary education continues to grow but access to both physical and human resources remains fixed (Moore & Preston, 2010). The major challenge is that ODL has not received much recognition and acceptance as a viable alternative to face to face education by most governments particularly in the developing countries (Agolla, Muyambiri & Oladeji, 2011; SADC, 2013). This perception has led to governments not being committed to finance ODL education as compared to the financial assistance they extend to institutions in the conventional system of education. Thus, the growth of ODL is severely constrained due to lack of financial, human, physical, technological resources and infrastructure (Nyaruwata, 2013, p. 9). In order for ODL institutions to remain relevant and competitive they need to be enabled to offer quality programmes and/or services to their customers. There is need for capacity building for ODL institutions to appropriately use open and distance learning methods and technologies more effectively to improve access, quality and efficiency of education service delivery (SADC, 2010). This paper argues that ODL institutions can be enabled through quite a number of resource mobilization strategies that will be discussed later in subsequent chapters.

3. Methodology Used

This is a qualitative research which used desktop research methodology. The authors relied on secondary data, by the use of both published and unpublished materials which included but not limited to books, journal articles, conference papers, newsletters, working papers, document analysis and personal experience of the core author as she was a member of the resource mobilization committee for the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL). BOCODOL has since transformed to a fully-fledged university under the name Botswana

Open University. Data was analyzed through conventional content analysis.

4. Resource Mobilization Strategies

4.1 Partnerships

Kurasha, Mupa and Chiome (2013) defines a partnership as “a shared commitment where all partners have a right and an obligation to participate and will be affected equally by the benefits and disadvantages arising from the partnership.” Ahmed and Iqbal (2014) claim that for joint collaboration and meaningful partnerships in education there should exist a strong regulatory framework, flexibility in provision and good quality assurance. Institutions can enter into partnerships to mobilize resources. When an organization enters into partnerships, both parties must sign a partnership agreement. This partnership agreement should be clear, understandable, detailed and contain no ambiguous words. The partnership agreement should show what each partner is going to contribute in the partnership. It should also show who is going to benefit what in the partnership. Further the partnership should show the duration of the partnership. Moreover, it should show who the partners are. The partnership agreement should also show what would happen at the end of the partnership. It should also address issues of how disputes will be solved if they arise in the partnership and show what will happen if one partner fails to do their part in the partnership. A partnership agreement should show what type of partnership the partners are entering into, the type of business they will be carrying out and where the partnership will be carried out. The partnership should also show who is responsible for what in the partnership. It should also show the powers and obligations of the partners in the partnership. There are different types of partnerships that an establishment can use to mobilize funds. They include Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Partnering with other Universities/Colleges and Partnering with the International Community. The following subsection introduces and discusses each of the listed partnerships, in turn.

4.1.1 Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

Robertson, Mundy, Verger and Menashy (2012) define PPP as “a cooperative institutional arrangement between public and private sector actors.” According to Dewulf, Blanken and Bult-spiering (2012) in PPPs, public and private actors share costs, revenues and responsibilities. Organizations can partner with the private sector to mobilize funds for capital projects. Universities or colleges can send their learners for apprenticeship with partner companies. Experienced staff from the private sector can offer guest lecturers to learners. Experienced staff from the private sector can be used in internal workshops, conferences and seminars. University or college employees can be attached in the private companies so as to gain hands on experience as the world is dynamic, hence the employees will be abreast with the ever-evolving world. An institution can offer training at a discounted price to its partner company employees. An institution can source out sponsorships for fees, special events like graduation, and graduation prize through the partnership.

Private companies have social responsibility budgets set aside therefore universities or colleges can enter in an agreement with local private companies to get a portion of the social responsibility funds. They can use these funds to strengthen their budgets and dedicate these funds to carry out capital projects that are of utmost importance as most educational institutions are government owed hence the private sector will see itself as giving back to the society through an educational institution. Nkomo and Nhema (2015), Nuwagaba (2013), Fombad 2013 argued that PPPs can be done through management contracts, turnkey, leasing, joint ventures and build-operate-and-transfer.

(1) Success Stories and Challenges

Nuwagaba (2013) claims that PPPs can fast track the economic growth of a country provided the right conditions and environment are in place. This paper argues that PPPs if handled properly can improve service delivery. For example, Kanye's Mongala mall in the Southern District of Botswana was built as partnership between the Southern District Council and a private firm called Time Projects. Further a second mall is being built through the same arrangement in the same village. In South Africa, Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital, Gautrain Rapid Rail Link, Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre were realized through PPP arrangements (Fombad, 2013).

According to Thomas and Olufuwa (2013) challenges affecting PPPs in higher education in Nigeria are inadequate guidelines on how private and public sector should partner in providing higher education. Among some of the inadequacies Nigeria's PPPs arrangements in higher education are;, inability of heads of higher institutions to relate well with private organizations in their locations, lack of awareness of any policy on public-private partnership in higher education, lack of structures, laws monitoring and mobilizing systems to enforce public-private partnership in higher education, failure of government to recognize and honour private organizations that provide infrastructure or support research activities in higher education, inadequate provision of information on the institution status and needs to the private organizations when requesting assistance, administrative bottlenecks in private sector that inhibits financial contributions and other forms of assistance, inability of higher institutions to give accounts of private organization's financial assistance, inability of higher institutions to approach private sector assistance and lack of financial capacity by private sector to assist in providing higher education. The educational institutions in developing countries face most of the above challenges (SADC, 2013).

4.1.2 Partnering With Other Universities/Colleges

ODL institutions can partner and collaborate in such areas as materials development, learner support, quality assurance systems, credit transfer and portability of qualifications, research and exchange programmes. Thorkildsen and Stein (1996, p. 25) define university school partnership as "an agreement on mutually acceptable goals and objectives as well as on means of achieving them." Patrinos (2005) defines contracting as the process whereby a government procures education or education-related services, of a defined volume and quality, at an agreed price, from a specific provider for a specified period where the provisions between the financier and the service provider are recorded in a contract. According to Davies and Hentschke (2006) partnering can be done through networking, coordinating, cooperating and collaborating. Educational institutions can network to improve education quality by writing materials together thereby sharing costs of material writing as partners will share the budget, teach the programmes together in different universities either locally, regionally or internationally. They could also share information technology costs and this would bring more customers to the institution. Johnstone et al. (2006) state that reasons for partnerships include organizations jointly offering learners courses that would end up in degree or certificate programmes, institutions accommodating partner's academic programmes and institutions testing machinery from business partners. Institutions can partner with each other internationally or even locally. International institutions can market each other's programmes, which can be a certificate, diploma, degree or postgraduate qualification.

Partners can do lecturer exchanges where lecturers in the same field and same faculty can pay a semester visit to a partner institution in the same area. They can also do student exchanges where students in the same program with the partner university would school for a minimum of a semester in the partner institution. These types of exchanges would enable both lecturers and students to learn a different culture and get more knowledge. The employees of these universities may write research papers together. People are familiar with their own environment, cultures and norms and can easily get better reception than foreigners hence partners in different countries can write papers together each collecting information from his/her own country on the same matter. This would make the research much cheaper to undertake.

4.1.3 Partnering With the International Community

An institution can mobilize resources by seeking international partnerships. It can partner with international organizations like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for collaborative research programs. Institutions can partner with international agencies such as African Capacity Building Foundation, Agence Fracaise de Development, Australian Agency for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency, Commission for Research Partnership with Developing Countries, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Council for Environmental Education among others. For example, Robertson et al. (2012) stated that UNESCO has an agreement with Microsoft that supports diversity, access, inclusion and exchange of best practice and communities of practice. The authors further states that UNESCO has produced ICT competency standards for teachers with Microsoft, Intel and Cisco and are in the process of making a portal that connects literacy experts and educators worldwide. Hence educational institutions can partner with Microsoft through UNESCO to train their employees and students in information technology which is ever evolving. Experts from education institutions can link with the rest of the world through the portal. Institutions can also ask for grants and subsidies from foreign embassies in their home countries. An institution can seek donations from international foundations that support education especially ODL mode. An institution mobilizing funds from international organizations and community should be result oriented and have to communicate frequently with the donors. For example, NGOs use donors most of the time to mobilize resources (Sosniecki & Fiederline, 2014).

4.2 Domestic Resource Mobilization

Whiteside and Bradshaw (2014) define domestic resource mobilization (DRM) as “the generation of savings from domestic resources and their allocation to socially productive investments”. The authors highlights that both the private sector and public sector play important roles in domestic resource mobilization with the public sector mobilizing domestic resources through taxation and public revenue. An educational institution can use individuals to mobilize resources to carry out capital expenditures. An institution can mobilize resources locally by looking for wealthy individuals who have a passion in supporting education. These wealthy individuals can give out pledges to the institutions to help it to mobilize resources to enable it to run and expand. They can further give out donations and inheritance to an educational institution. An institution can create an account in their names and buildings can be named after them as a way of showing appreciation for their support.

An educational institution in short of staff and even having no funds to pay and sustain new employees can use the services of retirees, technical experts or interns who are willing to offer their services for free (acquaints) or at minimal cost. These individuals can be given certificates of appreciation, a present as an acknowledgement for their support. They can also participate in college events such as corporate parties by giving out speeches, marketing and advertising programmes and college events. Acquaints can be enrolled from indigenous schools, universities, domestic government offices (Sera & Beaudry, 2007). Inter departmental voluntarism can also be used by institutions to offer services in the college. For example, short courses department can solicit the services of academic staff or other officers with technical experts instead of recruiting outside staff and can only recruit if there is no one with requisite skills inside the organization. The short course department can then give some percentage of the fees that they collected to the academic department concerned to boost their budgets. The academic staff can in turn use the funds for research.

(1) Success Stories

When Botswana started building the University of Botswana campus after the Lesotho's withdrawal from the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS), it was built through individual contributions under the "*motho le motho kgomo*" (every person contribute a cow) campaign where every Motswana had to contribute something they could, with the cow as a symbolic representation of the gesture, towards the building of the University Campus. Batswana contributed cows, cash and grain towards the building of the University (Mokopakgosi, 2008).

Another success story comes from Mozambique. DuPree, Winder, Prasad and Turitz (2000) stated that in early 1990 Mozambique was the poorest country in the world. The foundation for Community Development (FCD) wanted to facilitate self-reliant development in Mozambique with the objective to rebuild local capacity. In the process, the foundation felt that it was important to raise funds locally from the onset. Their efforts paid off in just two years through endowment contributions, debt swap, local grants, foundations, international NGOs and World Bank.

4.3 Use of Business Methods

Educational institutions can use business methods to raise funds. Business methods that educational institutions can use include but not limited to bonds (e.g., corporate bonds, debentures, subordinated debentures, mortgage bonds, municipal bonds) business loans, crow funding and debt swap. Institutions can seek the assistance of financial advisors to engage in the above named business methods.

4.3.1 Bonds

Keown, Martin, Petty and Scott (2004) defines a bond as a type of debt or long-term promissory note issued by the borrower promising to pay its holder a predetermined and fixed amount of interest per year. An institution can determine how much funds it needs to raise and then list a bond in the local Stock exchange. Institutions will need an expert to help them determine the bond price, bond duration, interest payments, how many times in a year it has to pay the said interest and the bond listing requirements of the Exchange. Different kinds of bonds that ODL institutions can use include; corporate bonds, debentures, subordinated debentures, mortgage bonds, municipal bonds. These are explained in the following subsection.

(1) Corporate bonds

According to Collings and Taillard (2013) corporate bonds are bonds issued by corporations to raise capital with debt. This debt is longer term with maturity of more than a year after the date of issue and these bonds are listed on the Stock Exchanges. An organization can issue corporate bonds as a way of mobilizing resources for capital expenditures as well as for operational uses. Types of corporate bonds are explained below:

Types of corporate bonds

(i) Debentures

Brigham and Houston (2016) define a debenture as a long-term bond that is not secured by a mortgage on specific property. Debentures are simply an unsecured bond and an institution can use a debenture as a way of mobilizing resources, as it doesn't have to use its assets as collateral. Since a debenture is unsecured, investors buying it will want a high interest for them to bear the risk of a debenture.

(ii) Subordinated debentures

Brigham and Houston (2016) define a subordinated debenture as bonds having a claim on assets only after the senior debt have been paid in full in the event of liquidation. An institution that has debts already can issue a subordinated debenture to mobilize resources but this kind of bond is highly risk and the investors will want a higher return to carry the risk.

(iii) Mortgage bonds

With mortgage bonds, the business offers security for the bond using its assets as collateral. An institution can issue a secured bond or get a long term loan using its assets like land and buildings. The amount that an institution can get will not exceed its assets values hence the valuation of these assets has to be done before an institution gets a mortgage bond or a loan. The valuation has to be done by a professional and reputable valuer. In the case of an educational institution getting a mortgage loan the valuer has to be recognized by the bank. An institution can use the above funds to carry out capital expenditures or for operational activities.

(2) Municipal Bonds

This is a debt security issued by the state, country or government department to finance its capital expenditures. These kinds of bonds are exempt from taxes since these are government owed. These bonds carry zero default risk and hence pay a low interest. Most educational institutions are government owed and can issue municipal bonds as a way to mobilize resources. These bonds like corporate bonds are listed on the Stock Exchanges. In Botswana the government auctions governments bonds through the Botswana Stock Exchange (BSE). For example, parastatals like Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) in Botswana raises funds by issuing bonds in the Botswana Stock Exchange.

(3) Business Loans

An ODL institution can get commercial loans from building societies or development banks for venturing into another line of business. It can get real estate loan for capital expenditures like buildings and buying machinery. It can also get operating loan to run day-to-day activities. An institution can also get loans from government departments that offer loans. There are plenty of sources of business loans and when an institution desires to get a business loan it should consider interest rates, amount required, duration of the loan and the terms and conditions of the financiers.

(4) Crow-Funding

Micic (2015) defines crow-funding as a form of fundraising usually conducted over the Internet in which a large number of people pool relatively small individual contributions in order to support a specific goal. Schwienbacher and Larralde (2010) stated that crow funding is financing of a project or a venture by a group of individuals instead of professional investors such as business angels, venture capital or banks. An institution can use crow funding as a way of mobilizing resources. An institution can set up an internet page and ask for small amounts of money from individuals both locally or international and state the reason why it is mobilizing such funds. An institution using crow funding should advertise this over radio stations, televisions and newspapers. An example of crow funding in Botswana is that used by a charitable organization called SOS called P1, P1 million campaign, where the charitable organization is seeking P1 donation from each individual to raise P1 million.

(5) Reinvesting the Funds From the Government Budget

Since the money that comes from the government to an educational institution during budget allocation is lump sum and an institution won't be using all this money at once it should reinvest the rest of the money. It can do this by buying government bonds listed on their country stock exchanges since they carry zero default risk. They can also invest the money in mutual funds' money market section. Reinvesting the money will enable an institution to earn some interest that it can use to run its day to day activities.

(6) Debt Swap

Moye (2000) argued that a debt swap involves the voluntary exchange by a creditor with its debtor, of debt for cash, another asset or new obligation with different repayment terms. The author highlighted that the rationale for such swaps is that debt can be acquired at a discount. An institution can rearrange its debt obligations with its creditors. The rearrangement can be done through the negotiation of new interest rates, new installments amounts and new payment period. There are different types of swaps, but an educational institution can use debt-for education swap. Cassimon, Essers and Renard (n.d) define debt-for education swaps as the cancellation of external debt in exchange for the debtor government's commitment to mobilize domestic resources for education spending. The history of debt swaps started with businesses. For example, Cassimon, Essers and Renard (n.d) wrote that Chile was the first country to implement institutionalized debt-for equity swap scheme in 1985.

UNESCO (2011) argued that in the late 1990s France with Paris Club members signed agreements with thirteen countries such as Mozambique, Cameroon to convert external debt into investment in a broad range of sectors including education, infrastructure, rural development, health and environment. An ODL institution can use debt-for-education swaps. An ODL institution can get into another business and issue a bond to the public through the stock exchange. After some years with the advice of professionals, it can then swap the bond for equity but in doing so, an institution should be careful not to lose majority shareholding in its business.

4.4 Diversification of Line of Business

ODL institutions can mobilize resources by diversifying their line of business to reduce dependency on one source of income. This means one business will sustain the other business. Many educational institutions like BOCODOL are government owned and have access to land as compared to private institutions. Part of the is under-utilized or idle but is located in big villages, towns or cities that have shortages in accommodation, limited health facilities, limited shopping complexes or even shortage of transport. Institutions can make use of the available land to venture into other businesses. DuPree, Winder, Prasad and Turitz (2000) stated that the Foundation for Higher Education (FES) in Colombia which was initially set up to generate support for the University del Valle in Cali, Colombia diversified into another line of business that is commercial financing company which is very successful.

4.5 Government Intervention

Governments should intervene to help educational institutions to mobilize resources. Governments can intervene through such things as:

4.5.1 Tax exemptions and an Increase of the Tax Base

Tax exemptions and rebates can be offered to businesses and individuals supporting education as an incentive to encourage them to give more. Giving tax exemptions would even encourage others to participate, thus ensuring a flow of funds into the education system. Governments may also use tax as a source of income to support educational institutions. This could be achieved by way of increasing tax rates or creating other forms of tax with an intention of increasing tax base. Governments can create taxes in non-essential items such as cigarette tax and plastic tax. Funds collected from these taxes can be directed towards the development of education

4.6 Linking with International Organizations and Other Initiatives

Governments unlike individuals or organizations are known and trusted by the international community. They should, therefore, use this leverage to help the educational institutions to mobilize funds from international donors such as UNESCO, African Union (AU) and SADC. For Example, governments throughout the world offer tax exemptions, collect taxes and link with international organizations on behalf of businesses and government authorities. In addition, other innovative resource mobilization initiatives could be adopted, including among others; the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs), offering short courses at a fee, income from research and consultancies, the use of alumni to mobilize needed resources as well as national, regional and international integration of ODL institutions.

5. Concluding Remarks

Adequate resources are the enabling factors in ODL delivery. The quality of products and/or services provided in distance and open learning is subject to the quality of resources used as inputs. This paper argues that ODL can be enabled through the identification, adoption and use of different resource mobilization strategies. There is no resource mobilization strategy that is better than the other. Strategies outlined above can be used in combination to complement each other. Resource mobilization policies need to be put in place for ODL institutions to be successful in resource mobilization (World Health Organization, 2008). It is of paramount importance for organizations to have dedicated officers who are experienced in resource mobilization. These are the officers who will help to make sure that resource mobilization strategies are part of the overall business strategy and are given support to implement them. The overall business strategy of ODL institutions should clearly indicate resource mobilization strategies that will be undertaken including a dedicated budget to the same. Business Development Officers are also important in resource mobilization endeavours because they can come up with cost-efficient measures of doing business and also help institutions in expanding their line of business. They are also experts in business processes engineering or re-engineering. Resource mobilization is a way of building and enhancing capacity in distance and open learning education system. SADC (2013, p. 26) argued that "enhanced capacity should be treated as a goal on its own right, not merely as a means for achieving other development objectives and that support for capacity building should focus on three integrated dimensions of capacity which include human capacity, organizational capacity and institutional capacity." There is an urgent need to counter the perception that ODL is an inferior form of educational provision and this can be effectively done by developing clear ODL policies and strategies. This can help governments, financial institutions and donors to buy in the idea of ODL educational system. There is also a need to establish national, regional and international institutional collaborations in ODL delivery to enhance capacity building, sustainability, quality and competitiveness of ODL institutions around the world.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The challenges of resource constraints faced by many ODL institutions especially those in poor and developing countries can be mitigated by different initiatives. This paper has looked at different resource mobilization strategies which include, but not limited to Public Private Partnerships (PPP), Domestic Resource Mobilization, Use of Business Methods, Diversification of Line of Business, Expanding the Donor Base, Involving Individuals, International Partnerships, Government Intervention, learning from NGO fund raising strategies and other innovative resource mobilization strategies which can be used to overcome the challenges of resource constraints. The paper argues that resources are an important enabling factor for ODL institutions to succeed in their programmes delivery. It further argues that the quality of education highly depends on the quality of resources used as inputs and that for ODL institutions to remain relevant and competitive they need to offer quality products and/or services. The resource mobilization strategies provided in this paper can be used in combination to complement each other. There is no strategy that is superior to the other. This paper further argues that for resource mobilization initiatives to be successful, resource mobilization policies should be put in place. There is also a need to incorporate resource mobilization initiatives into the overall business strategy and hire resource mobilization experts who will drive these initiatives. The paper has also identified the stereotype attached to ODL as one of the factors which compromises resource allocations to ODL institutions either by governments or donors. This then means that there is need for a strong emphasis on ODL advocacy through national and regional ODL polices and strategies. Finally, the paper argues that there is a need to establish national, regional and international institutional collaborations in ODL delivery to enhance capacity building, sustainability, quality and competitiveness of ODL institutions around the world.

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