Western Education was brought into Nigeria in 1842 by the Christian Missionaries. Their main objective was to covert the heathen Africans into Christianity. They also needed clerk, catechists and interpreters. The scope of the education was too narrow. Since then, education in Nigeria has undergone a lot of changes. In 1882, the first education ordinance was passed. With this passage, Government started giving the missionaries Grant in Aid and this helped in widening the curriculum of education.

Between 1920 and 1921, African Education Commission known as Phelps-Stokes Commission was set up to study the native and relevance of education in Africa. The commission found that, although, the provision of educational services and facilities in Africa would to a large extent be credited to the activities of the Christian Missionaries and also great service have been rendered to the African natives by the mission bodies, these missionaries have not realized the importance of education in the development of the Africans.

Between 1921 and 1926 Phelps-Stokes Commission was appointed to determine the quantity and quality of education provided for African natives. The commission recommended that education should be adapted to the needs of the individual and the community. The commission reports geared the British Colonial Government to demonstrate its interest in African education by using its first education policy in 1925. The task of translating the 1925 education policy into reality in Nigeria was that of Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor. Clifford identified the poor quality of education and the mushroom growth of schools as the two major defects in Nigerian educational system. The outcome of his efforts at achieving these was the Education ordinances N0.15 of 1926 which provided:
1. For registration of all teachers as a condition for teaching in any school.
2. That new schools could be opened only after approval by Director of Education and the Board of Education
3. For regulating minimum pay for teachers in the assisted school.

The main object of the 1926 Education Ordinance was to curb the development of mushroom schools or hedge schools and to improve the quality of the teachers.

The commissions on Higher Education-Asquith and Elliot commissions were set up in August and June 1943 respectively. The main purpose of the commissions was to consider the principles which guide the promotion of higher education. The Asquith commission recommended that Universities should be established as soon as possible.
On January 18, 1948 a University was born—the University College Ibadan following the transfer of the Yaba Higher College to Ibadan to form the nucleus of the new University College.

Between 1951 and 1960, the country witnessed Regional Education Policies. MacPherson constitution of 1951 provided for the regionalization of education by assigning an increasing measure of responsibility to the regions. The Education Act, No. 17 of 1952 was enacted to reflect the provisions of the new constitution. With this act, Education became a regional affair and education policies were meant to be derived from the needs and philosophy of each region. Also the act provided for Adult, Women, Technical and Rural education at the regional level.

As a British Colony up till 1960, the system of Education in Nigeria could not but derive from the British system. Even the curriculum was British, and it was only on the eve of independence that people began to questions the relevance of the existing curriculum to Nigerian environment. There were several attempts at making the curriculum relevant, these attempts culminated in the National Curriculum Conference of 1969. The Federal Government set up a committee in 1973 to study the recommendations of that conference. Government’s views on the report of the committees were published in 1977 in a White Paper entitled “National Policy on Education”. The policy has undergone several reviews 1981, 1988, 2004. The National Policy on Education deals with all aspects of education, from its philosophy, different levels and structure, financing types of education to educational services, administration and planning of education.

Between 1966 and 1970, the country was engaged in crises that culminated in 30 months civil war. During this period not much happened in education sector, but since after the civil war a lot of developments and events have taken place in all areas of Education. Such developments and events include:

- Universal Basic Education (UBE).
- Increase in the number of institutions at all levels
- Prioritizing policy implementation in Education
- Reviewing current innovation practices.
- Establishment of National Examination Council (NECO)
- Parent Partnership in Special Needs Education
- National Universities Commission and Accreditation issues.
- Establishment of New Federal Universities
- Phasing out of Teacher’s Grade Two Institutions
- Establishment of Joint Matriculation Board (JAMB)
- Politics in Education
- Nomadic Education
- Establishment of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
There are many more events and developments in Education since the beginning of this century in Nigeria. I will rather talk on just one of them – Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria (ODL).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Nigeria
Open and distance learning refers to education and training in which using learning resources rather than attending classroom sessions the central feature of the learning experience.

Distance learning refers to situations where learners are physically separated from the educational provider, communicating in writing (using letters mails, e-mail, fax or computer conferencing) verbally (by telephone, audio conference, video conferencing) or in face to face tutorial/facilitation sessions.

According to Jegede (2010) distance learning is the provision of education by a mode other than the convention face-to-face method whose goals are similar to, and just as noble and practical as those of on-campus, fulltime, face-to-face education.

It is a system characterized by physical separation between the teacher and the learner, in which instruction is delivered through a variety of media including print, and other Information Communication Technology (ICTs) to learners who may rather have missed the opportunity earlier in life or have hitherto been denied the traditional face-to-face formal education due to socio-economic, career, family and other circumstances.

In Nigeria, the case is becoming that of rejection of learners who are qualified by the conventional Universities due to limited space and facilities. But thank God that some conventional Universities like the Universities of Ibadan and others are establishing distance learning, centre in different parts of the country. We shall show the statistics of this rejection rate in University admission in Nigeria.

Open learning refers to situations where learners use resources in a flexible way to achieve that goals. The resource may be print, audio or computer based, used at home, at a Study Centre or in the work place with or without the guidance of a tutor or mentor. Defining the open learning further, Jegede (2010) said that it refers to the flexibility of, and access to instruction by the distance education mode in order that broad availability of education opportunities reach as many segments of the population as possible. Openness and access according to him disregard age, previous level of academic achievement, and other factors, which normally erect artificial barriers to education as a life-long pursuit in a democratic environment.

Our conventional Universities place a lot of obstacles to intending learners. One of the results of such placement of obstacles is that our boys and girls move to other countries like UK, Ukraine, Germany, USA, Canada, and even African countries like Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya etc. our country is loosing a lot of manpower and money to all these countries.
Table 1: Jamb Admission Statistics 1999-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Applicant</th>
<th>No. Admitted</th>
<th>No. Rejected</th>
<th>Success Rate %</th>
<th>Failure rate %</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>418,928</td>
<td>64,358</td>
<td>354,570</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>416,691</td>
<td>64,358</td>
<td>370,925</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>1:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>749,727</td>
<td>45,766</td>
<td>658,958</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>1:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>994,381</td>
<td>90,769</td>
<td>942,536</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>1:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1,046,103</td>
<td>51,845</td>
<td>941,112</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>1:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>841,878</td>
<td>74,361</td>
<td>767,516</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,467,708</td>
<td>432,090</td>
<td>4,035,618</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table speaks volume on JAMB admission in Nigeria. It is to be noted that the Statistics has not changed rather the number rejected are increasing geometrically by year. One may ask where are these rejects? Where do they go? Some continue trying JAMB for up to six years and scoring lower in subsequent years?

According to Ezekwesili 2006, “the foregoing has created a funnel, effect where we are assimilating and educating only a fraction of the critical mass of the society, the youth while spewing out a large uneducated mass. In essence, we are producing less and less of the leaders of tomorrow; the managers, the medical doctors, the policy makers, the law enforcement officers, the professionals…

According to United Nations (UN) Charter of 1948, education is a human right. The global movement is towards Education For All and the eradication of illiteracy; if the singular most important wish of any parent and family group is to provide education as a liberating, empowering and an economic instrument to an offspring, should we not give the need to close the gap in educational opportunities in this country as top priority? Therefore, I must convince you that there could be no better place and more opportune time to speak about and together resolve the issue of taking the distance out of higher education in the Nigeria of the 21st Century.

Importance of Open and Distance Learning in Nigeria

It is not feasible to have the entire citizens of Nigeria educated within the four walls of the conventional Universities. Since we can have them educated through other means, we have no option than to use Open and Distance Learning. This system of education among other things:

- Allows one to work and learn
- Allows the disadvantage and the restricted like the prisoners to acquire education
- Allow learner to come into the system with whatever qualification and build upon that.
- Is cost effective independent of time, location pace and space?
Provides avenue to learning in ways most appropriate, effective and efficient to the individual learner.

Provides life-long and life-wide education in order to build a learning and knowledge based society.

Converse nations income and expenditure as it reduces the number going abroad for education especially as many remain there permanently.

Is practiced in all developed countries of the World-America, Germany, Australia, Canada, India, China, South Africa, Greece etc.

Quality Assurance in ODL

One of the comments by members of the public in this system of education is quality assurance. When Sandwich programme started in the Universities in Nigeria, some people condemned it on the ground that education is being watered down. Some even suggested that sandwich degree certificates should contain the word “Sandwich” to differentiate it from the certificates through regular programme.

When School of Basic Studies or Preliminary Studies were established, some universities were reluctant to admit candidates with IJMB certificates for direct entry. Up till now some states do not employ teachers with NCE certificates obtained National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) because such certificates were obtained through distance learning system (DLS) and are considered inferior.

We all know that the same Federal Government that gave approval to the regular Universities to operate gave same to IJMB, NTI, NECO and NOUN. It is also the same University Senates that gave approval to Sandwich and mature programmes where the same lectures who teach the regular also teach these part-time programmes.

In National Open University of Nigeria which uses ODL system, appoints regular University lecturers as their facilitators. Arrangements according to Tenebe (2011) have reached advance stage with the NUC for accreditation of her courses and programme.

A team of the Presidential Visitation panel equally visit NOUN in ..... 2011. NOUN does not admit any unqualified candidates. NOUN collaborates with all Open Universities in the World. It is more difficult to get a degree through ODL than the conventional Universities.

One of the greatest African leaders Nelson Mandela is a product of ODL. The National Open University of Nigeria has successfully conducted electronic examinations for two times now. A situation where students click grade at the end of their examinations and they get score immediately without other human factors. The openness and removal reduction of distance in the system do not affect the quality of learning.
Conclusion and Recommendations

Illiteracy brings about poverty, suspicion, superstition and fear. It brings underdevelopment, crime and negatively affect all aspects of human endeavour. An illiterate is dangerous, crude and seriously disadvantage. University education is necessary for all.

Several new attributes of learning are coming to force. According to Jegede these include learning how to learn, life-long learning, ability to master knowledge from related disciplines etc.

Let us join hands in providing access to University education by making it open removing all aspects of distance from education.

Thanks for listening and welcome to Abeokuta once more.

References

