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POLICY ON DISTANCE EDUCATION DELIVERY BY TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

1.0 Introduction

Distance education has been defined as any system of teaching and learning in which the students are physically separated from their teachers for most of the time they are studying. The separation in space and time of teaching and learning is a basic feature of distance education (Dodds, 1986). However, distance education as we use the term here can - and usually should - include some face-to-face study. In fact, we shall argue that some form of feedback and reinforcement, preferably through contact between students and teachers or between students and fellow students, is an essential element.

2.0 Distance Education - the Sierra Leone context

Distance Education (DE) needs to be differentiated not only from conventional classroom-based education but also from private study at home. What distinguishes distance teaching and learning from these others is that it is an institution-based activity that is consciously designed to effect predetermined learning outcomes in students most of the time from a 'distance'. It is within this context that this policy is designed to provide standardized guidelines for all Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) when delivering any of their courses through the distance mode.

For many students the overriding benefit of distance learning is that it gives them access to an education that they would otherwise not have. There can be many reasons why a student may not be able to access existing provisions. These include: -

- (i) Living a long distance away from a providing institution, e.g. in a remote rural part of the country where there is no tertiary college or university,

- (ii) being unable to travel to a centre, even if it is not very remote, e.g. there may be difficulty in getting regular transport to get to the learning centre on time; the students may have family commitments which make it difficult to leave their homes,
- (iii) not being free to study at set hours, e.g. shift workers or those who travel a great deal in their work,
- (iv) physical disability making travel or classroom attendance difficult, e.g. wheel chair bound students,
- (v) overloaded provision, e.g. very large classes, enrolments closed, long waiting lists for places,
- (vi) a needed course is not offered at a close-by institution.

Distance Education presents many opportunities for students, among which are:

- (i) bringing education materials within easy reach of the students, e.g. workbooks, audio, cassettes, contact by telephone or the web,
- (ii) enabling students to study at times that suit them, e.g. basing the course around a workbook, a web site or even a personal project enable students to study at times when they are free,
- (iii) expanding provision. Because (generally speaking) distance learning has lower unit costs than face-to-face teaching, more students can be taught for a given fixed budget.
- (iv) expanding capacity. One severely limiting factor on expanding education in a developing country such as Sierra Leone is teacher numbers. Distance education has proved to be a very effective way of training teachers, especially the so-called UU (untrained and unqualified) teachers in Sierra Leone (Thompson and Mansaray, 2012).

Other benefits to students include the fact that the complex design processes necessitated by distance learning usually result in a higher quality of course materials and delivery systems than would be found in conventional classroom.

While DE has great potential for making tertiary education more accessible, there are certain prerequisite conditions that must be satisfied to assure high quality delivery. For example, the

preparation of distance learning courses tends to be a team activity, involving specialists, for example in curricula design, learning materials development, modes of delivery, etc. Most draft materials are reviewed by a panel of experts and some materials are tested before use. These processes tend to produce learning materials of a very high standard. These are then used within distance learning systems where tutors are trained in distance learning techniques and monitored and supported by experienced staff.

Unfortunately, the Baseline Study on which these Policy Guidelines are predicated (Masallay and Frazer-Williams, 2020) found none of these in practice in all the institutions. What was discovered was that the teacher training modules that were produced in line with professional guidelines over two decades ago are still being used without any revision. The fact is that there is a grave paucity of professionally trained personnel in distance education in all the TEIs visited. In some institutions, the print materials are either the usual pamphlets produced by conventional classroom teachers, or text books that are photocopied and bound for use in distance learning programmes. This situation poses a grave danger to the quality of DE programmes in the country, and, therefore, necessitates the formulation of precise guidelines to regulate their operation in the country.

3.0 Underlying Principles of the Policy

Distance Education is relatively new in the education landscape of Sierra Leone. That notwithstanding, it has become a very expedient and popular mode of tertiary educational delivery, especially for up-grading teachers and training new ones to increase the number of teachers in the expanded education system. It has also been popular among some private TEIs to deliver courses in Theology, Community Development Studies and Management. However, this popularity is not without shortcomings.

If properly organized and managed, Distance Education can yield economies of scale. Expansion and improvement cost money. With the orthodox education system, the cost rises as the number of students increases. But there are many other competing demands on the national budget, therefore, educational planners are attracted by a technique which increases opportunities for education without significantly increasing the costs of doing so. Distance education presents a very attractive option in this respect.

Distance education has also been popular among some private TEIs to deliver courses in Theology, Community Development Studies and Management. However, this popularity is not without shortcomings. The results of the Baseline Study (Massalay and Frazer-Williams, 2020) revealed that almost all the TEIs delivering DE programmes do not have the requisite professional capacity to do so effectively and efficiently along contemporary programmes (see Annex 1). Hence, the need for this policy document to streamline, monitor and regulate their activities to assure quality of standards.

4.0 Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of the policy are to:-

- provide a regulatory framework which guides TEIs in the delivery of high quality DE programmes;
- create a conducive platform for the delivery of effective and efficient DE programmes;
- safeguard potential DE students from fraud and inferior qualifications;
- ensure that off-shore providers of online DE courses conform to professional integrity and the laws governing quality education in Sierra Leone;
- guide distance teaching institutions concerning the acquisition and use of appropriate teaching/learning materials.

5.0 Policy Statements

5.1 All DE programmes offered by any TEI, at any level, must be duly approved by the TEC.

5.2 TEIs delivering courses through the distance mode must endeavour to provide and maintain the physical and human resource infrastructure at the level necessary to embark on distance education activity effectively as follows:

(a) Physical infrastructure for the delivery of DE courses shall include, headquarters, regional study centres, and where possible, district study centres.

(b) Such centres shall be equipped with a small resource library holding relevant reference materials and any other relevant electronic equipment that the learners can freely use during

face-to-face periods or any other time during which they can access the centres for purposes of learning.

(c) Examination centres or Local Contact for conduct of off Campus Examination

5.3 Admission requirements for DE programmes shall be the same as for regular campus-based ones of the same type/level. Such admission requirements shall be as determined from time to time by the TEC under its Admissions Policy for TEIs.

5.4 There shall be established within the TEC a Quality Assurance Team (QAT). The composition and Terms of Reference (ToR) of the QAT are as specified in the section on Implementation.

6.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework of the Policy

The Tertiary Education Commission Act, 2001 and the accompanying Statutory Instrument of 2008, provide the legal and regulatory framework for this policy. The generality of the functions of the TEC, as enshrined in 7 (1) of the TEC Act 2001, include “to advise government on tertiary education” and “to ensure parity of the products of tertiary education institutions”. The Statutory Instrument of 2008 further empowers the TEC to set out standards for the TEIs, including “the minimum number and duration of programmes at the certificate, diploma or degree level that ought to be offered”. (Section 5 (1) (b)); and in 5 (1) (d) determine “the standards of proficiency assessed in terms of content and contact hours which students are expected to attain in respect of a certificate, diploma or degree programme”.

7.0 Implementation

For the purpose of implementing this policy, there shall be established within the TEC a Quality Assurance Team (QAT) with the following Terms of Reference:

1. The QAT shall implement this policy, as directed by the Commission pursuing the objectives herein stated and quality demands presented in the policy.
2. In particular, the QAT shall assure the coherence, consistency, relevance and quality of all distance education programmes delivered to the Sierra Leonean clientele. For this purpose, it shall have the power to develop precise guidelines regulating the

- development and delivery of DE programmes by TEIs for the approval of the Commission. Guidelines on Standard Operating Procedures for the delivery of DE programmes shall include but not limited to the following:
- a. Administrative arrangements for DE including the office/centre coordinating DE and/or E – learning that shall be linked to the institution’s central management.
 - b. Training staff involved in DE with particular reference to curriculum design, course development, writing skills and modes of delivery.
 - c. Training on online and print platforms and the various technological and other appropriate practical modes of delivery such as discussion boards, web pages, email, voice chat, texts, multimedia technologies, books and pamphlets printing etc.
 - d. Training on distance mode of examination and other assessments.
 - e. Strategies for effective engagement of learners on DE mode.
 - f. Training on the design and execution of practical exercises for DE students in the sciences and technology and their modes of assessments.
3. The QAT shall have the authority to assess the teaching/ learning facilities used by TEIs (both software and hardware) to ascertain that they are of the highest possible standards.
 4. The QAT shall be responsible to the Commission through the Chairman of TEC, from whom they shall take all administrative directives.
 5. The QAT shall present a half-yearly report of their activities to the Commission through the Chairman, who shall act on it as necessary.

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Annex 1

BASELINE STUDY REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OFFERING PROGRAMMES THROUGH THE DISTANCE MODE: SEPTEMBER 2020.

1. History of Distance Education in Sierra Leone

Open and Distance Learning started in Sierra Leone in 2001 to address the training needs of in-service untrained and unqualified teachers who constituted 40 percent of the primary school population at the time (Report by Prof. E. Thompson). In the past, it provided a means especially for in-service training of unqualified primary teachers in the rural areas. Nowadays, the scope of distance education has been expanded. In addition to providing a means of training for untrained and unqualified teachers, it provided access to tertiary education to many potential students offering diverse programmes including religious studies, development studies and business management.

2. Findings from Study

2.1.Target Audience for Distance Learning

In the past, distance learning was provided for in-service untrained and unqualified teachers who cannot gain admission into university or college through the normal entry route because they do not have the required numbers of credits in the West African Senior Secondary School Examination. However, over the years, some learners prefer distance learning because it provides an opportunity for them to remain in employment whilst pursuing education and knowledge.

2.2.Admission Requirement

All institutions visited follow the standard requirements of three (3), four (4) and five (5) credits or better in not more than two sittings in the West African secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) or General Certificate Examination (GCSE) Ordinary Level for certificate, diploma and undergraduate degree programmes respectively. However, there are slight variations between institutions. Some of the main highlights of these variations are as follows:

TC Programme: 2 credits at WASSCE or NVQ required at MMCET, FTC and EP

2 credits at WASSCE plus work experience or NVQ required at MMCET, FTC and EP

3 Credits required at UNIMAK and EBKUST. At EBKUST, UU teachers with no WASSCE results are required to pass an entrance examination in English and mathematics.

HTC-P: 3 Credits at WASSCE or National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) or TC holders at EP and FTC

- OR 2 Credits plus TC/NCTVA diploma plus pass in matriculation examination
- Or 2 Credits plus work experience plus a pass in the matriculation examination
- 3 Credits at WASSCE or NVQ or TC holders with 3 years experience at EBKUST
- HTC-S:** 4 Credit at WASSCE including English language or matriculation examination or NVQ at MMCET, FTC, EBKUST, or 3 credits plus TC plus a pass in matriculation examination.
- 4 Credits at WASSCE including English Language or if without English a pass in matriculation examination at EP.

A mature age entry requirement is also operational for long service teacher (Four to ten years teaching experience depending on the institution) at 40, or those beyond the age of 40 years are on payroll and without the entry requirement to enroll for the TC programme.

2.3.Popularity, Types and Duration of programmes offered by the Distance Mode of Education

The distance learning programme is popular to in-service teachers who have the option to remain employed and attend classes in the evening or during holidays. It is particularly popular to untrained and unqualified teachers who are beyond the age of 40 and do not meet the normal entry requirements of tertiary institutions and can only acquire higher education through the distance mode. Also, some learners are attracted to the Distance Learning programme because it costs less than the traditional face-to-face campus-based mode and they can study in their time from home.

The majority of the programmes offered by Distance Mode of Education are TC, HTC-Primary and HTC – Secondary. The duration for the TC and HTC programmes is the same as the conventional face-to-face and are three and four years respectively. However, there are concerns amongst some of the institutions that the TC programme has lost its relevance.

Other than the teacher training programmes offered by some institutions, the Evangelical College of Theology (TECT) offer two and four years Certificate and Diploma respectively as well as Bachelor programmes. UNIMTECH offers undergraduate degree course in the Management school through the Distance Education mode for six years compared to four years for the conventional face-to-face programme.

The Evangelical College of Theology at Jui award Honours degree to students who excel from both the Distance Learning and campus-programmes. There are no Honours Distance Learning programmes at UNIMTECH.

2.4.Materials used for DL

Students in the Distance Learning mode are generally provided with modules, handouts/lecture notes. In some institutions, teaching notes are available in their websites. At some institutions, students are also referred to text books for core courses.

2.5.Materials used Media of Delivery used by Institutions

Two modes of delivery are used by institutions offering distance learning.

These are the following:

- Printed handouts/lecture notes
- Electronic – web based (email, institutions website)

Several reasons determine the mode of delivery the institutions normally use to teach their students. Those in remote parts of the country without access to regular electricity supply and are challenged in accessing internet rely on printed handouts which can either be collected at the institution's distance learning centres or in the case of the Freetown Teachers College, students will travel to the institution head office to collect printed handouts. In the case of UNIMTECH, students are encouraged to make use of the online service provided.

2.6.Activities undertaken at the DL centres

All institutions visited operate the basic educational needs at the centres which include face-to-face teaching, studying and examination activities. Learning is mostly by face-to-face mode of engagement in the various centres. In addition, the centres are used by students for meeting periodically with their mentors, colleagues and centre coordinator to discuss, interact and share ideas relating to the course/programmes, face-to-face teaching takes place during holidays. This is because, the majority of the students are in-service teachers who are engaged during the day and term time.

Some centres are able to host recreational activities. In addition, in the case of UNIMTECH, students are provided with counseling opportunities and massaging facilities.

2.7. Examination

There are two types of examinations students in the DL programme can take: either the national NCTVA examination or the institutional examination. With regard to the institutional examination, students sat for the same examination with those enrolled into the face-to-face programme in their institution.

2.8. Cost

The cost of distance education is equal to, or exceeds the conventional face-to-face mode of delivery in most of the institutions. At the University of Makeni, students enrolled into the Distance Education programme pay less. This is because the Catholic Mission subsidizes the cost of the programme for students and a philanthropist from Koinadugu Falaba also sponsors some of the students. At UNIMTECH, the increased cost in Distance Education is due to the course materials provided to the students.

2.9. The use of ICT in Distance Mode of Education

The use of the electronic mode of conducting distance education in the country is low. Several reasons subscribe to this:

- Distance Education is mainly conducted using the old traditional face-to-face mode
- Most of the centres are not equipped with ICT facilities
- There is a dearth of skilled personnel for ICT and online learning platforms in the institutions to support modern communication.

With the exception of the University of Management and Technology (UNIMTECH), all other institutions offering distance mode of education use only Whatsapp and email as an alternative means of delivering teaching materials to students.

2.10 Self-assessment/evaluation of the Distance Mode of Education

Nearly all institutions do not conduct any specific self-assessment study to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes. They have largely relied on comparison between the Distance Learning and the traditional campus-based student performance which they reported to be comparable. However, few institutions are planning on embarking on evaluation of their Distance Learning programmes. Currently at UNIMAK, the Quality Assurance Directorate relies on student feedback on the programme. Such feedback is not regular and is rather occasional. Eastern Polytechnic reported conducting an evaluation of their Distance Education programme only once many years ago. There has been no follow-up on this over the years.

2.11 Capacity Building needs for Distance Education in Sierra Leone

Most of the tutors in Distance Education have either not received any training specifically designed for distance mode of delivery or received training several years ago. In isolated cases, tutors are given some aspects of training by NGOs. In general, institutions offering Distance Learning need

training of personnel involved in the programme. Details of tutor's capacity building needs are listed in the recommendation section (3.0).

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

3.1. Conclusion

Distance Education is an innovative approach that increases access to tertiary education and provides a cost-effective means of receiving education. However, it is still in its infancy in Sierra Leone. The print constitutes the main mode of delivery in Distance Education countrywide. The use of modern communication technology is still very minimal. The use of modern technology is required to improve and upgrade Distance Education in the country. At the national level, there is no umbrella body that coordinates institutions offering Distance Education and there is lack of collaboration between institutions offering Distance Education.

3.2. Recommendations

The following are recommended to improve the quality of the Distance Education programme in Sierra Leone:

- i. Similar programmes especially the teacher training programmes offered by all institutions should have the same entry requirement, structure and curriculum.
- ii. The TC programme is now obsolete and should be phased out
- iii. Institutions offering Distance Education programmes should at least assess the effectiveness of the programme biennially.
- iv. There is urgent capacity building needs for all institutions offering the Distance mode of education. Training is specially needed for personnel in the following:
 - Developing course outline and course format
 - Course writing for distance education and course review
 - Delivery skills for effective learning by the student
 - Examination preparation guide
 - Distance Learning study guide
 - Learning support services for the programme
- v. An umbrella body is needed to provide coordination and oversight to institutions offering Distance Education. TEC may wish to take a lead on this. It is therefore recommended that a directorate is set up with TEC to take over this responsibility.

Annex 2

POLICY DEVELOPMENT ON OPEN DISTANCE AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

1.0. Background, Context and Rationale

The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) and the Corona Virus Pandemic (COVID-19), have caused a public health emergency necessitating extra-ordinary health emergency measures to contain their spread. The public health emergency and its attendant preventive health protocols and personal hygiene Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), have created what has been described as a new normal in social interactions and functioning of social organizations. Avoidance of large gatherings of people, physical and social distancing have led to new initiatives in delivering formal education programmes including the use of open and distance learning strategies. Not only have these strategies been increasing in popularity but their demands in terms of professionalism have been increasingly felt. A number of formal educational institutions at the basic and tertiary level have been experimenting, if not toying, with Open distance learning modes of delivery. In the absence of the required resources and expertise the challenges of this mode have been enormous and its poverty of delivery in some instances has been stark.

2.0 Open and Distance Learning (ODL)

ODL is an omnibus term to denote a non-traditional form of education and learning in which the tutor and the learner are separated by physical distance. In general, the learner chooses what, when and where to learn. In the process of tutor-learner interaction physical distance may be bridged by Information, Communication Technology (ICT)- assisted teaching and learning. Openness in this context implies the centrality of the learner to make decisions on when, where and what to learn. ODL includes various forms of adult learning, non-formal education, distance education and continuing education. In this context education is the transmission of knowledge and information in a manner which is deemed morally acceptable. This definition draws from that of R.S. Peters (Ethics and Education); who stated that education is “the transmission of that which is worthwhile in a morally unobjectionable manner”.

3.0 Distance Education – Some Historical Antecedents

The early forms of distance education were in the 1950s and 1960s by correspondence colleges. The Rapid Results College (RRC) and Wolsely Hall both based in the United Kingdom played major roles in correspondence education. Distance Education as is known currently was essentially in the form of print-based learning materials which were prepared, packaged and delivered through the post to hundreds of thousands of students around the world. A number of Sierra Leoneans were reported to have used this mode of education to qualify for admission to tertiary and higher education institutions. As one would imagine the post office was a highly reliable and efficient public institution which delivered learning material to students and course work for assessment to tutors timeously. After independence in 1961 and with the provision of education becoming a key objective of the central government, the popularity and influence of the Rapid Result College and Wolsely Hall began to wane. The Constitutions of Sierra Leone 1991 makes provision for Educational Objectives (see chp. 1(9) 1). Currently, universities with very large student population (Mega universities) around the world are delivering high quality distance education. The UK Open University, the UlamaIqbal Open University in Pakistan, the University of South Africa, the Indira Ghandi National Open University, and the National Open University

of Nigeria are the big players in the distance education enterprise with hundreds of thousands of students around the world.

In Sierra Leone, resort to distance education was a response to the crisis created by the large number of untrained and unqualified primary school teachers which according to official estimate was forty percent (40%). The implications and consequences of a low quality teaching force necessitated a fast-track training modality at the in-service level on a large scale. Distance Education was the preferred mode of training because it allowed untrained and unqualified teachers to be in service and at the same time available for training. At the time this mode of training seemed cost effective and efficient. However, studies to determine the quality (fitness for purpose) of this mode concluded otherwise.

4.0 Studies on the Distance Education Mode of Delivery in Sierra Leone

4.1 Environmental Scan on Education in Sierra Leone with Particular Reference to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

This environmental scan (Alghali et al. 2005) was undertaken at the request of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The scan assessed the upgrading programme for untrained and unqualified primary school teachers which commenced in 2001. The first cohort of students qualified with the Teachers Certificate (TC) in 2004.

According to the New Education Policy (GOSL, 1995: 19), the objective of the programme was to ensure “the production of teachers of high quality and in sufficient quantity”. The policy made provision for the use of broadcasting through radio because of its wide coverage and cost effectiveness. It stated that:

“Quality radio programmes can be broadcast relatively cheaply all over the country but particularly to rural areas where populations are thinly dispersed and access by road difficult. The broadcasts will be of immense benefit to all learners”.

It was discovered by the scan that the School Broadcasting Unit which had responsibility for educational broadcasting was dormant after a very short period in existence.

Although Distance Education was a key programme intervention and delivery mode by the teachers’ college and cross border providing institutions there was no quality assurance. Consequently, programme delivery was deemed to be of low quality. According to the report on the scan the regulatory body for tertiary and higher education, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), was unable to provide quality assurance services and play its regulatory role effectively.

4.2 In 2007 a Government of Sierra Leone Project (467 GLO 1003.15) on “Support to Strengthen the Capacity of Primary and Basic Education Teacher Training Institutions in Sierra Leone” embarked on the revision of the national policy on education and training of primary and basic education teachers. The project which was supported by UNESCO had the following objectives:

- Coordinate the revision of the National Policy on Education and Training of Primary and Basic Education Teachers in Sierra Leone.
- Review and appraise the existing national educational policy and plan documents on teachers.
- Study the teacher demand and supply as well as conditions of service of teachers in Sierra Leone.
- Review the policy framework and strategies for a National Teaching Service Commission.
- Draft a new national policy on education and training of primary and basic education teachers.

Part 3 of the report is on a new national policy on education and training of primary and basic education teachers. Open learning inclusive of Adult, Community and Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) was proposed. It was stated that:

“The challenges and scope of learning needs of the ACCET clientele necessitate diversity and variety of provision; but that in diversity there should be quality of esteem in provision. ACCETT should strive to share the high standards which obtain in the formal system, and should utilize a combination of delivery approaches and multimedia strategy.

Emphasizing the Continuing Education and Life-Long Learning dimensions, the report stated that Education and Learning are continuous and conterminous. People should continue to learn through life as a natural process although the purpose and structure of learning may be dictated by the demands of globalization and the impact of ICT. What should be learnt and how learning is transacted are determined by the needs of the learning society and economy. Continuing education and life-long learning are part of the open learning ideology which is characterized by open access, flexibility in organizing learning and multiple use of learning transactional approaches.

4.3 In 2012 an evaluation of the one-year distance education programme for untrained and unqualified teachers was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Sciences and Technology (MEST). The evaluation was undertaken by Ekundayo Thompson and Abdullah Mansaray. In their final report *New Paths to Professional Development in Teacher Training*, a number of Policy options and recommendations were made to address the key findings in relation to the following:

- “Are the course contents, duration and cost of the training appropriate and sufficient?”
- “Is the institutional framework for implementing the programme appropriate and adequate?”
- What learner support facilities are used and how appropriate and adequate are they?

The study found that:

Although print-based modules constituted a significant element of the pedagogical support to students, they did not sufficiently meet the requirements of distance learning principle (see for example, Dodds, 1986, Rontrae, 1990)

Many of the pedagogical facilities normally associated with distance learning were either not available, or were inadequate, or simply not used at all. “It was observed that even a potentially valuable resource such as community radio, where it was used, was exclusively for making announcements rather than for delivery of the courses. Computers, Internet, projectors for making power point presentations, were not used for pedagogical purposes even though they were provided by partners such as UNICEF. The delivery mode of the programme was heavily paper-based with little recourse to the use of ICT.

4.4 ODL Policy Development by the University of Sierra Leone in March 2011 the University of Sierra Leone initiated a process of developing a policy on Open distance and Life-Long Learning as part of comprehensive policy development towards quality assurance. The draft policy is yet to be validated.

5.0 Suggested Policy Proposal for Open Distance and Life-Long (ODL) Programme Infrastructure

Provision of open distance and life-long education and learning opportunities are in conformity with the objectives of the Government of Sierra Leone and international Conventions and Declarations (including the MDGs) to which the government is a signatory. The exponential growth of the population of young people and adults in search of educational opportunities and the programme responses by a growing number of institutions necessitate regulation of institutions and their delivery modalities to ensure quality.

It is the objective of regulation for quality provision that informs the proposed ODL Policy proposals which address the following:

1. Institutional capacity and mechanisms to provide ODL
2. Availability of staff with the requisite training, qualifications and experience to administer and manage ODL (programme design delivery management and administration)
3. Organizational structure
4. Level of ICT compliance
5. Nature of partnership (if any)
6. Financial capacity
7. Quality Assurance
8. Programme Accreditation
9. Examination and Academic Awards
10. Programme Review

The Policy proposals on ODL is informed by the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, the Education Act, 2004, the Tertiary Education Commission Act 2001, regulations and Policies The NCTVA Act 2001, and other relevant legislations. Their provisions shall apply where necessary.

In conformity with the existing legal provisions with respect to provision of education at all levels, and with respect to the letter and spirit of interactional conventions and declarations including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Open Distance and Life-long Learning programmes shall be developed in accordance with existing principles and procedures.

- Institutional capacity and mechanism

- Institutions with the requisite institutional framework and mechanisms shall design, develop and deliver open distance and life-long learning programmes which arise from and respond to the needs of potential learners.

- Programmes shall be designed, developed and delivered by qualified and experienced personnel in accordance with established ODL policies and principles.

- A team approach shall be used in the process of programming. The team shall be comprised of writers, illustrators, graphics artists, editors and ICT specialists.

- Stated learning outcomes shall be the basis for writing print-based materials

- A specialized unit/department with a qualified experienced head shall be responsible for all aspects of programme development. Election of HoDs shall be in accordance with laid-down institutional policies and TEC policy guidelines.

- A multi –media approach combining print, electronic and other forms of programming modes shall be used.

- The principle of cost-effectiveness shall inform programme development and delivery.

- Learner/support services including field based centers shall be provided

- Of campus coordinating mechanism shall be instituted.

- Time lines for all aspects of material production and delivery shall be issued and strictly adhered to. Adherence to timeliness in ODL is an imperative.

- In-service training of staff for ODL shall be part of the institution's continuing capacity development.

- Face-to face interaction between tutors and learners/students shall be an integral part of the delivery mode.

- Programme assessment modality shall make provision for students' assessment of all aspects and components of the programme.

- Quality assurance mechanisms shall be built into the learning processes

- Opportunities for student- student interaction shall be provided through study field centres and other social forms of learning opportunities

- Triennial programme reviews and assessment shall be undertaken as part of institutional internal quality assurance requirements.
- Budgetary allocations shall clearly indicate allocations for ODL resources including cost of materials production.
- Assessment of learners' work shall include feedback to enable students monitor their progress.