



TRENDS IN B.ED (ODL) ENROLMENT: A STUDY OF KENYAN UNIVERSITIES (2006–2010)

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ABSTRACT

The demand for trained teachers continues to grow globally, prompting the need for flexible, accessible teacher education models. This study examines enrolment trends in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs in selected Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010, analyzing factors influencing enrolment, completion rates, and institutional challenges. Using a descriptive survey design, the study collected data from four public universities Masinde Muliro University, Egerton University, the University of Nairobi (Kikuyu Campus), and Kenyatta University. A sample of 228 respondents, including students, lecturers, and administrators, provided insights into ODL enrolment patterns. Findings revealed steady but lower enrolment in B.Ed (ODL) compared to regular B.Ed programs, with annual growth influenced by factors such as financial constraints, institutional infrastructure, and student support services. Between 2006 and 2010, Kenyatta University recorded the highest enrolment (42.5%), followed by the University of Nairobi (22.5%), Egerton University (22.5%), and Masinde Muliro University (15%). Although enrolment increased by 25.93% over the study period, challenges such as limited ICT resources, inadequate student support, and gender disparity persisted. More male students enrolled in ODL programs, citing flexibility, affordability, and better access to learning resources as key motivators. The study concludes that expanding ICT infrastructure, improving instructional resources, and enhancing student support services could significantly boost ODL enrolment and retention. The affordability of ODL programs presents a cost-effective alternative for teacher education in Kenya. The study recommends policy interventions to strengthen ODL delivery, ensuring broader access to quality teacher training.

KEYWORDS: *Open and Distance Learning, B.Ed Enrolment Trends, Teacher Education, Kenya, Higher Education Policy*

INTRODUCTION

The global demand for qualified teachers remains high, despite significant strides made since the Dakar Education for All (EFA) conference in 2000. Even as countries work toward universal education, millions of children could still be left out of school, potentially facing lifelong disadvantages (UNESCO, 2010). Addressing this challenge requires expanding teacher training opportunities, and one solution that has gained prominence is Open and Distance Learning (ODL).

ODL is not a new concept—it dates back to early forms of communication and has long been used as a tool to bridge geographical and time constraints in education. By allowing teachers to pursue training while remaining in their communities, ODL provides a scalable and flexible solution to teacher shortages. Governments worldwide have recognized its value and have integrated it into teacher education strategies to tackle several critical issues in the education sector.

One of the main challenges ODL aims to address is the persistent shortage of qualified teachers. During the 1990s, the number of teachers barely kept pace with increasing student populations. Even where teachers were available, many were either untrained or underqualified, particularly in developing countries. In 2001, reports showed that nearly half of all teachers in some regions lacked the necessary qualifications (DFID, 2001). The situation was further complicated by gender disparities, with female teachers remaining a minority in many cultures—an issue that has been linked to lower enrolment rates for girls.

Beyond teacher shortages and training gaps, the evolving role of teachers presents another challenge. Modern classrooms demand more than just traditional teaching skills; educators are now expected to integrate inclusive education, digital literacy, and life skills into their teaching (UNESCO, 2010). This shift has increased the need for continuous professional development, which is often underfunded and lacks structured policies in many countries (OECD, 2000). As a result, alternative training models like ODL have become essential in upskilling teachers without disrupting their professional duties.



Kenya, like many other countries, has embraced Open and Distance Learning as a means of expanding access to teacher education. Universities offering Bachelor of Education (ODL) programs play a crucial role in addressing teacher demand while providing a more flexible learning pathway for in-service teachers. However, trends in enrolment within these programs have varied over the years, influenced by factors such as policy changes, technological advancements, and funding allocations.

This study explores the enrolment trends of B.Ed (ODL) students in Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010, shedding light on the factors that influenced student numbers, the challenges faced by ODL institutions, and the overall impact of these programs on teacher education. By understanding these trends, stakeholders can make informed decisions to strengthen ODL initiatives and enhance access to quality teacher training in Kenya and beyond.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The demand for trained teachers continues to rise globally due to factors such as population growth, natural attrition, and career shifts into other professions. In Kenya, the shortage of qualified teachers remains a pressing issue, impacting the quality of education (Wolffenden et al., 2010). To bridge this gap, there is a continuous need for teacher training programs that not only equip new educators with relevant skills but also provide opportunities for practicing teachers to upgrade their qualifications, adapt to technological advancements, and meet evolving curriculum demands.

To address this need, multiple study modes are available, including full-time face-to-face programs, school-based training, part-time evening courses, and Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Among these, ODL offers a particularly flexible and accessible solution for teachers who must balance professional responsibilities with further education. By allowing educators to study remotely and at their own pace, ODL has the potential to significantly expand access to teacher training.

Despite its advantages, the enrolment trends in B.Ed (ODL) programs in Kenyan universities have not been fully explored. Public universities, in particular, have not maximized ODL's potential in addressing teacher shortages (Mboroki, 2007). If these institutions expanded their B.Ed (ODL) programs more effectively, they could increase teacher training capacity and alleviate resource constraints in traditional teacher education programs.

Additionally, several challenges affect enrolment and retention in ODL programs. Teachers who wish to further their studies often face financial constraints, lack of study leave with pay, and competing work and family responsibilities. These factors influence their ability to enroll, persist, and complete their studies. Given these dynamics, understanding trends in B.Ed (ODL) enrolment between 2006 and 2010 can provide valuable insights into the growth, challenges, and sustainability of ODL teacher training in Kenya.

This study, therefore, seeks to analyze enrolment patterns in B.Ed (ODL) programs within Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010 examining factors such as enrolment growth, course completion rates, retention trends, cost implications, and the role of technology in ODL delivery. By doing so, it aims to inform policy decisions and institutional strategies for improving access to quality teacher education through ODL.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the Enrolment rate of B. Ed (ODL) students in Kenyan Universities offering B.Ed (ODL) programmes from 2006 - 2010.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What is the Enrolment Rate of B. Ed (ODL) Students in Kenyan Universities offering ODL Programs from 2006-2010?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Wedemeyer's Theory of Autonomy and Independence (1974). This theory provided a foundation for understanding the trends in B.Ed (ODL) enrolment by explaining the role of learner independence in shaping Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs in Kenyan universities.



1. Theory of Autonomy and Independence (Wedemeyer, 1974)

Wedemeyer's Theory of Autonomy and Independence emphasizes that distance education is a multidimensional system that enables learning beyond physical classroom constraints. He argued that artificial signal carriers—such as printed materials, radio, television, and later digital platforms—bridge the gap between instructors and learners, allowing education to be accessible regardless of location.

One of Wedemeyer's core ideas is that ODL minimizes the direct role of teachers, placing greater responsibility on learner autonomy and self-direction (Dellion, 1992). This shift in focus led to the evolution of Open and Distance Learning models, which allow students to learn at their own pace, in their own environments, and without needing to attend traditional classroom sessions (Moore, 1977).

This theory is particularly relevant in examining trends in B.Ed (ODL) enrolment in Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010. The growing adoption of ODL during this period can be attributed to its flexibility, which appeals to working teachers seeking to upgrade their qualifications without leaving their jobs. As universities expand ODL programs to reach a broader student base, the degree of learner independence and reliance on instructional technologies becomes a significant factor influencing enrolment patterns. By applying these theoretical perspectives, this study analyzed the key drivers behind enrolment trends ODL adoption in Kenyan universities.

Related Literature

The success rates of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs vary widely across different contexts, influenced by factors such as student motivation, program structure, financial support, and institutional resources. As ODL continues to expand as a viable alternative to conventional teacher education, understanding these factors is essential for analyzing trends in enrolment, completion, and retention rates in Kenyan universities.

Success Rates in Initial Teacher Training Through ODL

Studies indicate that ODL-based initial teacher training programs tend to achieve high completion rates when they offer a structured qualification pathway with clear benefits, such as job security or salary increments. For example: Early projects in Central and Southern Africa reported completion rates between 83% and 97% for ODL-based teacher education.

In Tanzania, completion rates reached 84%, while Zimbabwe reported 80% and Uganda 66% (Walker, 2007). In industrialized countries, such as the UK, the Open University found that 75% of ODL graduates secured employment within the teaching profession, similar to rates for conventionally trained teachers.

These trends suggest that B.Ed (ODL) programs attract committed learners who are motivated by career advancement opportunities. The promise of employment and higher pay encourages enrolment and sustains student commitment, leading to high retention and graduation rates. This aligns with Kenyan universities' efforts to use ODL to upskill in-service teachers who seek promotions within the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC).

Impact of ODL on Learning Outcomes and Subject Performance

Beyond enrolment figures, research also assesses the effectiveness of ODL in delivering quality teacher education. Studies from Indonesia and Sri Lanka found that ODL-trained teachers performed comparably to their conventionally trained counterparts, with face-to-face instruction showing some advantage in mathematics but not in language subjects (Nielsen & Tatto, 1993).

In the Kenyan context, where STEM education faces persistent teacher shortages, these findings are particularly relevant. Universities offering B.Ed (ODL) programs must ensure that remote learning platforms adequately support practical subjects like mathematics and science to maintain enrolment and completion rates. The use of blended learning models, integrating face-to-face sessions with online coursework, could be a key factor in improving learning outcomes and attracting more students.

ODL as an Alternative to Secondary Education: Lower Success Rates in Pre-Service Training

Not all ODL programs achieve high success rates. Pre-service teacher training programs, where students enroll without prior teaching experience tend to face lower completion rates. For instance, at Nigeria's National Teachers' Institute, pre-service ODL students had a success rate of only 25–30%, significantly lower than in-service trainees. These students often had limited prior educational qualifications and lacked the motivation linked to immediate employment benefits.



This trend is particularly relevant when analyzing B.Ed (ODL) enrolment patterns in Kenyan universities. If a large proportion of students are in-service teachers, higher enrolment and completion rates can be expected. However, if pre-service students dominate the enrolment numbers, retention challenges may arise, leading to fluctuating enrolment trends.

Enrolment Trends in Continuing Professional Development Through ODL

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs through ODL present more varied enrolment and completion trends, often influenced by factors such as:

Work-study balance: If teachers must juggle full-time jobs with coursework, they may struggle with program demands.

Financial burden: Self-sponsored students often have lower retention rates, especially when study costs outweigh perceived career benefits.

Institutional support: Strong student support systems improve retention and completion rates.

Examples from different countries highlight these factors

Burkina Faso: A well-structured head teacher training program with low study demands and donor funding achieved high completion rates (Nielsen & Tatto, 1993).

Chile: Only 44% of teachers completed an IT-related ODL course due to high workload, self-funded fees, and limited career benefits. (Nielsen & Tatto, 1993)

India: A child guidance certificate program had just a 16% completion rate, as students had to self-fund their studies and put in 480 study hours with no guaranteed career advancement. (Nielsen & Tatto, 1993)

Pakistan (London Online Master's Program): Achieved a 100% success rate due to strong student support, fully funded tuition, and a respected qualification. (Nielsen & Tatto, 1993)

These insights suggest that B.Ed (ODL) enrolment in Kenya is likely to be influenced by financial aid availability, workload flexibility, and perceived career benefits. If universities provide strong academic support and ensure that ODL credentials are valued for promotions and salary increases, higher enrolment and retention rates can be expected.

Implications for B.Ed (ODL) Enrolment Trends in Kenya (2006–2010)

Based on international evidence, key factors influencing B.Ed (ODL) enrolment trends in Kenyan universities during this period may include:

Attractiveness of In-Service Training: Higher enrolment is expected if most students are working teachers seeking professional development, as these individuals are more likely to complete their studies.

Financial Barriers: Enrolment fluctuations may occur if students have to self-fund their education without study leave or financial assistance.

Technological Infrastructure: The effectiveness of ODL programs depends on access to learning materials and virtual interaction. Universities that invest in strong digital learning platforms are more likely to attract and retain students.

Perceived Career Benefits: If ODL qualifications lead to automatic promotions or pay raises, enrolment and retention rates will be higher.

Blended Learning Opportunities: Institutions incorporating some face-to-face interaction alongside ODL may experience higher success rates, especially in subjects requiring hands-on teaching practice.

The trends in B.Ed (ODL) enrolment in Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010 are influenced by a combination of economic, institutional, and personal factors. Studies from other countries show that ODL programs with clear employment benefits, financial support, and structured student engagement tend to attract higher enrolment and achieve better completion rates.



For ODL to continue expanding in Kenya, universities must address financial constraints, enhance student support services, and integrate technology-driven learning solutions to improve both enrolment and retention. By examining past trends, this study provided insights into how B.Ed (ODL) programs can be strengthened to meet the growing demand for teacher education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an exploratory descriptive survey design to examine ODL enrolment in teacher education, allowing for data collection from diverse stakeholders and analysis of enrolment trends (Cohen et al., 1994). The cross-sectional survey enabled the study to assess multiple variables at a single point in time, efficiently gathering insights from a large population within a short period (Orodho, 2005).

This study was conducted in four selected public universities in Kenya offering B.Ed (ODL) programs: Masinde Muliro University, Egerton University, the University of Nairobi (Kikuyu Campus), and Kenyatta University. These institutions were chosen for their established ODL modules and varying levels of experience in distance education, providing diverse insights into ODL in teacher education. The selected universities represented 43% of Kenya’s public universities and covered both urban and rural settings. The target population included directors, lecturers, registrars, and students from the four universities, totaling 1,700 respondents.

A sample of 228 respondents was selected, comprising 4 B.Ed (ODL) directors, 4 university registrars, 20 lecturers, and 200 third- and fourth-year B.Ed (ODL) students, who were considered the most experienced in ODL programs. The directors and coordinators participated in interviews, while students and faculty provided data on their ODL experiences. The sampled respondents were distributed as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1 Study Sample

University	Number of B.Ed (ODL) students	Number of B.Ed (ODL) lecturers	No. of Registrars	No. of directors	Total
University of Nairobi	50	5	1	1	57
Kenyatta University	50	5	1	1	57
Egerton University	50	5	1	1	57
Masinde Muliro University	50	5	1	1	57
Total	200	20	4	4	228

Source: Author (2010)

This study utilized both primary data collection methods. Primary data was gathered through questionnaires. Questionnaires were the primary tool for collecting information from directors, lecturers, registrars, and students, as they allowed for efficient data collection from a large number of respondents within a short time (Borg & Gall, 1983).

The validity of the research instruments was assessed through content validity, ensuring the questionnaire measured what it was intended to (Borg & Gall, 1989). To enhance validity, the researcher sought expert input from supervisors, lecturers, and curriculum specialists who reviewed and refined the questionnaire. Additionally, a pilot study was conducted at Kenyatta University (Kisumu Campus) to test the effectiveness of the instruments, with feedback used to improve clarity and relevance.

The reliability of the instruments was established using the test-retest method, ensuring consistency in responses over repeated trials (Neuman, 2000). The Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20) formula and Cronbach’s Alpha were used to measure internal consistency. The computed reliability coefficients 0.820 for students, 0.762 for ODL Directors, 0.947 for ODL students, and 0.782 for Registrars indicated high reliability, confirming the instruments were suitable for the study.

Data was analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Findings were presented using charts and graphs, and qualitative data from interviews was used to support or contrast questionnaire results.

Ethical principles such as confidentiality, informed consent, and participant protection were strictly observed (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Respondents were fully informed about the study’s purpose and voluntarily consented



to participate. Their privacy was safeguarded through anonymity, ensuring no names were disclosed in any research instruments. Participants were assured that the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Enrolment Rate of B.Ed (ODL) Students in Kenyan Universities from 2006 – 2010.

1. Enrolment Rate of Open and Distance Learning Students per University per year

The study examined B.Ed (ODL) enrolment rates in Kenyan universities from 2006 to 2010, revealing a steady increase from 1,350 students (22.5%) in 2006 to 1,700 students (28.4%) in 2010. Among the four sampled universities, Kenyatta University had the highest enrolment (2,250 students or 42.5%), followed by the University of Nairobi and Egerton University (1,350 students or 22.5% each), while Masinde Muliro University had the lowest (900 students or 15%).

The annual enrolment rate grew by 25.93% between 2006/07 and 2009/10, driven by the high quality, affordability, and accessibility of ODL programs (UNESCO, 2010). Research also supports that ODL students can achieve results comparable to those in conventional institutions (Robinson, 1997) and that ODL effectively reaches learners who may not have access to traditional universities (Mulkeen, 2010).

Table 2: Enrolment Rate of Open and Distance Learning Education Students/University/year (2006/2007-2009/2010)

Academic year	Masinde	Egerton	Nairobi	Kenyatta	Total (%)
2006/2007	200	250	300	600	1350(22.5%)
2007/2008	200	300	300	600	1400(23.3%)
2008/2009	250	300	350	650	1550 (25.2%)
2009/2010	250	350	400	700	1700(28.4%)
Total	900 (15%)	1200 (20%)	1350 (22.5%)	2550 (42.5%)	6000 (100%)

Source: Author (2010)

2. Enrolment of University Students in Faculty of Education versus B. Ed (ODL) Department per Year

The study compared B.Ed (regular) and B.Ed (ODL) enrolments from 2006 to 2010, revealing significant variations across universities. Kenyatta University had the highest enrolment, with 24,000 (42%) students in regular programs and 2,550 (4.5%) in ODL. Egerton University followed with 17,500 (30.6%) regular B.Ed students and 1,200 (2.1%) in ODL. The University of Nairobi enrolled 12,300 (21.6%) regular students and 1,350 (2.4%) ODL students, while Masinde Muliro University had the lowest enrolment with 3,300 (5.8%) regular students and 900 (1.6%) in ODL. The findings suggest that enhanced infrastructure and improved teaching/learning resources could drive higher ODL enrolment in the future (Oliveira, 2007). Improved communication systems would also make ODL more accessible, attracting more students.

Table 3: University Enrolment in Faculty of Education versus B.Ed (ODL) Department/Year/University.

University	Academic year									
	2006/2007		2007/2008		2008/2009		2009/2010		Grand Total	
	Faculty	ODL Dept (Bed)	Faculty	ODL Dept (Bed)	Faculty	ODL Dept (Bed)	Faculty	ODL Dept (Bed)	Faculty	ODL Dept (Bed)
Masinde Muliro	700	200	700	200	900	250	1000	250	3300 (5.8%)	900 (1.6%)
Nairobi	2800	300	3000	300	3000	350	3500	400	12300 (21.6%)	1350 (2.4%)
Egerton	4000	250	4000	300	4500	300	5000	350	17500 (30.6%)	1200 (2.1%)
Kenyatta	5000	600	6000	600	6000	650	7000	700	24000 (42%)	2550 (4.5%)
Total	12500 (22%)	1350 (2.4%)	13700 (24%)	1400 (2.5%)	14200 (25%)	1550 (2.7%)	16500 (29%)	1700 (3.0%)	57100 (100%)	6000 (10.6)

Source: Author (2010)



SUMMARY

The study revealed that B.Ed (ODL) enrolment in Kenyan universities remains relatively low compared to regular B.Ed programs. However, there has been steady annual growth, with enrolment increasing across institutions due to the rising demand for flexible teacher education pathways. Between 2006 and 2010, the University of Nairobi saw a 33.33% increase, Masinde Muliro 25%, Egerton University 28.57%, and Kenyatta University 16.6%, totaling 1,700 students in the 2009/2010 academic year.

Despite this growth, gender disparity persists, with more male students enrolling in B.Ed (ODL) programs due to better access to learning resources, affordability, and improved technology. Financial constraints were cited as a major barrier to enrolment, retention, and graduation, along with limited ICT resources, inadequate student support services, and outdated infrastructure in some universities. Additionally, students expressed concerns over employment prospects post-graduation, as B.Ed (ODL) qualifications did not always guarantee promotion.

The study further highlighted that Kenyan universities lack sufficient physical and instructional resources, with only Kenyatta University and the University of Nairobi having adequate ICT infrastructure for ODL delivery. Most students use a blended learning approach, integrating face-to-face instruction with e-learning. The cost of B.Ed (ODL) programs is lower than conventional programs, ranging from 3.3% to 26.4% less, making ODL a cost-effective and viable option for teacher education in Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The study found that B.Ed (ODL) enrolment remains low compared to the total B.Ed student population, though annual enrolment has been steadily increasing at a slower rate than other programs. Improved infrastructure, instructional resources, and technology could further boost enrolment. The affordability of ODL programs makes them an attractive option for many students, providing a cost-effective pathway for teacher education (Bates, 1984). With better facilities and enhanced support systems, more students are expected to enroll in B.Ed (ODL) programs in the future (Karani, 1995).

RECOMMENDATION

To increase B.Ed (ODL) enrolment, universities should invest in ICT infrastructure and adequately equip regional centers to enhance accessibility while keeping costs low. Expanding cost-effective delivery methods and strengthening student support services will attract more students and improve retention in Teacher Education ODL programs.

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