

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MAINTAINING THE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH ODL: THE CASE OF COLLEGE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (CODL) OF ST. MARY UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of this paper is to assess the challenges and opportunities in maintaining the accessibility and quality education through ODL. In Ethiopia, Open and distance learning mainly started with the emerging of private higher educational institutions. Since then, open and distance learning has passed through various challenges and opportunities. Descriptive research has employed to assess the issue of challenges and opportunities that St. Mary University encountered in maintaining of accessibility and quality education through ODL. Since the nature of the data contains both numerical and non-numerical data, mixed research method has been found proper. Questionnaire, in-depth interview and non-participatory observation tools were used to collect both the quantitative and qualitative data from graduate students and staffs of ODL units of St. Mary University. According to this paper finding, the accessibility of ODL and its quality has not gone as the time and technology allowed to go because of different obstructions. Thus, various elements has been found accountable for these problems. For the sake of better manageability, these elements has summarized in to four themes; such as distance, Market, attitude, and ICT. In contrast to this, CODL also will have opportunities if only St. Mary university able to increase the accessibility of ODL with quality education as fast as possible. To increase the accessibility and quality of ODL, St Mary University should take the experience of better world's universities in ODL and try to Ethiopianize for better implementation and result. Here, Ethiopianize refers to considering the Ethiopian peoples' cultural, social, economic, political and geographical distribution and adopting the experience of others especially in application of ICT. Furthermore, St. Mary University should encourage and strive innovations in ICT to modernize ODL system.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Opportunities; Distance; ICT; Market; Attitude

1. INTRODUCTION

As Taye define by referring UNESCO, the term Open and Distance learning reflects both the fact that all or most of teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the learner, and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure. The teaching can be both in printing media or e-learning and

sometimes by the combination of both printing media and e-learning mechanisms [1].

Taye has associated the origin of Open and Distance learning in the world with the preaching mission of St. Paul in the Roman Empire. He traced distance education back as far as the epistles of St. Paul, who wrote several letters on how to teach Christians (correspondence teaching). On the other hand, Willis proposes that Itinerant wanderers delivering information by word of mouth were perhaps the world's first distance educators [2, PP.5].

Unlike the experience of the world, the Distance education in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. It is started with the emergence of private colleges and universities in the country in the second half of 20th century. From this, we can understand that private colleges and universities were exemplary for the beginning of Open and distance learning in Ethiopia. But now both the government and private higher education institutions are giving the program widely [3, PP.19].

According to [1], the progress of Open and distance learning from the beginning to so far has been categorized into four generations. The first generation of distance education refers to those which mainly utilize written and printed texts. It is so-called print-based correspondence education. The second generation is characterized by the use of radio and television as instructional media in addition to print materials. This generation is often referred to as the industrial model of distance education with highly specialized division of labor in producing and delivering instructional materials and the potential to educate thousands of students at once. The third generation of distance education utilizes information and communication technologies (ICT) to provide interaction in addition to content delivery and fourth generation of distance education can be also said that there is an emerging generation of distance education where interactivity or two-way communication between teachers and students and among students becomes of utmost importance. So as researcher identifying the challenges and opportunities of ODL program helps to develop ODL program into the fourth generation.

1.1 Background of the study

As indicated by [4, PP. 3-5] education is the foundation of African development. Number of studies has shown that education, and especially primary education, has a positive effect on economic growth, earnings, and productivity in developing countries. Technology, and e-learning in particular, can help developing countries in Africa to meet both old and new challenges by providing a flexible and cost-effective medium for educating large number of school-age and adult Africans.

The reasons behind the acceptance of ODL system of instruction as an alternative approach to teaching and learning in conventional school system in Africa are not totally different from the global ones. For

instance, geographical and socio-economic circumstances, problems of educational imbalance, the establishment of adult education units and departments in African universities, improved communication systems and the introduction of the postal system in Africa were some of the major reasons [5, PP. 9-15]. Therefore, Ethiopia is not differed from other in developing countries to apply and integrating updated mode of teaching in its land. Of course, in Africa particularly in Ethiopia, the infant stage of infrastructural development and also the people's level of awareness toward technology make difficult the innovations of developed countries to apply and adapt to the country. Nevertheless, the question of adopting and integrating the technologies in to the strategies of ODL's accessibility and quality is not the issue of leave aside to the tradition as it was rather than it is an alarming issue that needs immediate response and firm struggle to redeem the peoples from illiteracy as well to eliminate barriers that affected accessibility and quality education. It is national responsibility for the higher educational institutions to combat the resistant of reformation and reluctant of technology. In our country experience, the people's customs and tradition is not opened for technology adaptation or introduction. It is always introduced new technology in to our land with high confrontation and rumor until they internalize the significant of technology. These technological challenges emanated from our experience of illiteracy. Therefore St. Mary University should work strongly over exploiting technology for ODL as quick as possible to eradicate poor attitude and illiteracy.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Now day open and distance learning is playing a great role on the effort of providing citizens with various types of educational fields without distance and work interruption. This helps citizens to hold their diploma or degree as well to promote their profession vertically and horizontally with minimum cost through distance. However, the access of education and its quality is not gone with the time and technology to satisfy the educational demand of the citizens. Indeed, the people's interest in and acceptance of ODL has grown swiftly. Nevertheless, there has been some controversy around the quality of delivery and instructional design [6, PP. 57-58].

The accessibility and quality of education through open and distance learning is an alarming problem in the context of Ethiopia which can't be resolved so far this day. From the researcher's own experience, the citizens imposed to search for another wrong means of holding their educational demand (their degree or diploma) due to unable to cover people's educational demand. For example, many of citizens are buying fake degree and diploma in market without the completion of the necessary requirements expected from them as long as they do not have access of education. Of course, this may be the result of individuals' greed for degree paper. Even some of the peoples who are in access of ODL are attempted to maintain a certificate in illegal way to hold their degree or diploma without the contemplation of quality of education.

This implies that there is still attitudinal encounters in the attempt of maintaining quality education.

In Ethiopia there are challenges and opportunities that faced the university in maintaining of quality and accessibility of education using ODL throughout the country. Both challenges and opportunities depicted on the country's various circumstances mainly on the market, technology, attitude and distance related elements. Taking this concept in to the focal point of the study, the researcher has been dig out facts and presented the result in the way to be input to take remedial action to maximize the accessibility and quality of education. Therefore, finding out challenges and formulated the proper mechanism and underline opportunities existed and implies the coming opportunities is the primary objective of the study.

Generally, the researcher has over viewed the challenges and opportunities the university will and have faced in maintaining of accessibility and quality education through Open and distance learning department of St. Mary University. Therefore, the researcher has paid his maximum effort investigating about challenges and opportunities that derived from the country's situation in technology, market, outlook and distance for infrastructure, interest, and so on.

1.3 Objective of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to identify the challenges and opportunities existed in maintaining quality and accessibility of education through ODL in order to improve the quality of education with accessibility.

1.3.2 Specific objective

- ❖ To assess challenges that the CODL are encountered in its effort of maintaining accessibility and quality of education through ODL.
- ❖ To identify opportunities that could make the CODL become advantageous in its effort of maintaining accessibility and quality of education through ODL.

1.4 Research questions

- ❖ What are the challenges the university faced in the course of maintaining quality and accessibility of education through ODL?
- ❖ What are opportunities the university would in its effort of maintaining quality and accessibility of education through ODL?

1.5 The Scope and limitation of the study

The scope of this paper is confined within the CODL of St. Mary University. In other words, the researcher exclusively concerned on challenges and opportunities the university would have in the course of maintaining accessibility and quality of education through ODL in Ethiopia.

1.6 Significance of the study

This paper has various importance for the institution (St. Mary University), citizens and also for the country as a whole.

This paper can have positive contribution for the institution (St. Mary University) in to four ways; one thing the paper can show the ways how the institution increases open and distance learners by recommending different mechanisms to attracting adults by using ICT. Second, the paper can serve as a road map which enables the ODL to increase accessibility and handling means of quality education to move one stage forward to the better advancement. Third, the paper also helps the school to generate more profit by reducing the expenditure and capitalize on the number of learners. Finally, the paper would enable the school to make difference and the leading institution in Ethiopia in line of its quality and accessibility even to the remote areas, where accessibility of infrastructure is poor.

This paper also could have great significance for the learners by eliminating unnecessary expenditure for transport, bed and other consumption during tutor, exam and research presentation as well as education fee. In short, the researcher would address unnecessary accommodation expenditure during tutor, exam, research presentation and even education fee. In addition to this, the learners also can attain the objective of their lesson by following the educational materials that would be released online by the school. Furthermore, the system would allow for asking and responding or two-way discussions between students and teachers as well as among students what is called fourth generation.

It is clear that when educated number with quality education become enlarged, our country and people' development in different sectors would be fastened. Intern, educated citizens may produce in quality that feeds various institutions which are engines to drive the country in to middle income countries.

1. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design and sampling techniques

The study is targeted at identifying challenges and opportunities that faced ODL program on the course of maintaining accessibility and quality of education through ODL program. Therefore, the challenges

and opportunities observed with regard to distance, attitude, market and technology/ICT. Therefore, to find out challenges and opportunities, the researcher opted descriptive types of research design for this study. Under descriptive research, mixed research approach has been employed, which helps to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions in order to attain the objective of the study.

As many scholars suggested that it's not manageable to deal with the whole target population. To manage the accuracy of the study, it is advisable to take identified the desired sample of population for the research .The sample size on this research is selected according to the type of the research design to be used, the desired level of confidence in the result, the amount of the accuracy needed and the characteristics of the population of interest to be selected from the target population constitute the desired sample [7]. Hence, in order to estimate the sample size for the study the researcher is planning to apply the formula and steps suggested by Yemane [8, 1967:886]. Which takes into account the level of margin of error at 0.05% and 95%for level of confidence.

Based on the record of CODL, in 2016, 1400 learners had been registered. However, only 1000 pupils were reported as they are completed all the necessary requirements to be graduated in 2019. Supposing 1000 students as the population size of study, from which 285 students has been selected for the sample size of the study using Yamane formula.

Equation 1. Sample size determination

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1000}{1 + 1000(0.05)^2}$$

n= 285

Where N =population size
n=desired sample size
e= level of margin of error

Here “n” is referring to the total number of the questionnaire tool respondents from graduating students of 2019 ODL program.

The reason why the researcher selected only graduate students was they are expected more experienced both about the challenges and opportunities they have been encountered from registering, learning process and finally graduating activity better than other students.

The Questionnaire survey is both open and close ended questions, which are mainly contains likert scale

questions with unstructured one. Using this questionnaire tool, the investigator aimed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data about the challenges that are encountered CODL as well as students throughout their stay with St. Mary University.

Simultaneously, the researcher has used qualitative data which was collected by using in-depth interview, for this data totally eight administrative and teacher staffs have been participated. Thus, who participated in the interview program were selected purposively for they have been served longer time in the university with the college of open and distance learning. Due to this, the interviewees expected to give better information about what the college are encountering various challenges in the course of maximizing the quality and accessibility of ODL and can prospect the opportunities the CODL would have. And the researcher has used non-participatory observation tool in order to understand students' interest and discipline in education and evaluation practice. This mainly helped to cross check the fact are collected through questionnaire and in-depth-interview tools about what are the CODL and its students are challenged of various problems.

3.2 The procedure in data collection

The procedure of data collection began with the preparation of questions that would be asked to the St. Mary University's ODL Staffs and students. The questionnaire respondents were selected using accessible sampling techniques from 2019 graduating students. In other hands, Those ODL staff interviewees were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Those respondents selected for the in-depth interview were expected to know and experienced with ODL program. Before the researcher proceed to disseminate the questionnaire or make interview with the selected candidates, he has been introduced the aim of the research and enable students to felt free and give valid information. As it is commonly done, the researcher has tried to pass through the necessary stages of the research science and ethics in order to answer the research questions and to attain the research objectives so as to keep the relevance of the paper.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

The quantitative data has been analyzed using SPSS software in correspondence of the qualitative data. Mainly the quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics through tables, percentiles and one-sample t-test.

The qualitative data that were collected through questionnaire, in-depth interview, observation, document analysis and using relevant scholars view has been analyzed by using thematic approach, which means the researcher analyzed and organized the data accordingly their attribution, similarity and association in maintaining the flow of the idea. In other hands, the data with various teams have been collected and analyzed on the base of their similarity and difference. Then three techniques of qualitative data analysis method are used. These are condensation, paraphrasing long interview in to succinct statement or shorter

formulation narrative creating a coherent story out of various interview and interpretation of the statement with the broader frame of reference. In due course various data that gained through questionnaire has been assisted by SPSS (statistical package for social science) to analyze and drawn on the table, chart and pi-chart. Finally, all the analyzed data have been integrated to come up with a holistic picture.

2. RESULT

3.1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Under this research, about 1400 students are registered in 2016 by college of open and distance learning. From this total number of students, only 1000 students were ready to graduate in June, 2019. Taking it in to consideration, the researcher used Yamane/Slovin formula and selected about 285 graduate students for the questionnaire tool, but it was only 245 students able to access for the actual data collection procedure.

Table 1- Gender of the Respondents

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Sex of the respondents	Male	153	62.4
	Female	92	37.6
	Total	245	100.0

Based on the above table, from the selected total respondents, 62.4% of students were masculine, whereas 37.6% of the respondents were feminine.

Table 2. Age of the respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Age category of the respondents	18-24	37	15.1
	25-30	155	63.3
	31-35	25	10.2
	36-40	23	9.4
	41 & 5 above	4	2.0
	Total	245	100.0

According to the above table majority of the respondents found under the range of 25-30%, they shared 63.3% of the total participants. About 15% of the respondents found under the range of 18_24. And the rest age category found above 31 age group.

3.2 Challenges

Here the researcher presented the challenges and opportunities of open and distance learning education in the course of maintaining the accessibility and quality of education. To identify the challenges and opportunities, questionnaire tool for students and in-depth interview for staff members has been employed. Based on these basic tools the researcher has found the following pivotal points. For the better understand and view, the researcher has categorized the challenges in to the following sub themes; such as distance, market, ICT and attitudinal based challenges.

3.1.2 Distance based challenges

Here the investigator wants to see challenges inline to distance in consideration of reaching quality and accessible education for citizens in peripheral areas of the country. Therefore, the challenges of distance should consider from two sides; that are distance effect on students and in the same time distance effect on the university.

Table 3. T-test of Distance impact on learners

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
No significant distance impact on your education	245	2.94	1.131	.072

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Upper
No significant distance impact on your education	12.993	244	.000	.939	.80	1.08

Test Value = 2

Based on the above table result, the mean value is greater than the expected value or the Test Value (2). This implies that students' education has been affected due to distance.

Let's see students' response rate towards distance effect on their education by using descriptive frequency.

Table 4. Distance effect on learners

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Distance had no significant effect on your education?	very — strongly disagree	40	16.3
	Disagree	44	18.0
	very strongly agree	52	21.2
	Agree	109	44.5
	Total	245	100.0

As the above table portrayed clearly, small number of students did not affected by distance. In figure, 16.3% of the respondents answered for the question very disagree, which means there is no distance effect on their education. In the same way, for about 18% of student respondents, distance is not as such a big challenge in their education. In contrary, significant number of students believe that distance has a sort of impact on their education. Figuratively, 21.2% of the respondents agree over the existence of distance effect on their education, whereas majority of the respondents whose figurative share is 44.5% from the total students very agree over the existence of distance effect on their education.

Indeed, the administrative stuffs and students have assured the existence of distance influence on students' educational success, finance and time utilization. And also, distance has effect on the institutions struggle for maintaining quality accessibility of education.

Table 5. Accessibility of ODL centers

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
There is abundant ODL centers in your area	strongly disagree	32	13.1
	Disagree	40	16.3
	strongly agree	57	23.3
	Agree	108	44.1
	Missed	8	3.3
Total		245	100.0

Even if majority of students answer as there is ODL center in their area, but based on the above passage higher number of students still agree the effect of distance over their education. So, establishing ODL center in each area is not enough by itself to eliminate distance-based effects on students' education.

When come to figurative description of the above table, 13.1% respondents did not sought that ODL center is available enough in their areas. Somewhat 16.3% of respondents also do not sought ODL centers is accessible enough to their areas.

Differently from the above sentence, majority of the respondents admit the existence of ODL centers in their areas. About 67% of the respondents acknowledge the existence of ODL centers in their areas. 3.3% off the respondents abstain neither to agree nor disagree nor with the question.

Table 6. Conduciveness of tutorial classes

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Tutorial classes and places are conducive for teaching learning	strongly disagree	56	22.9
	Disagree	64	26.1
	Strongly agree	24	9.8
	Agree	72	29.4
	Don't know	29	11.8
	Total	245	100.0

To check how their tutorial class is comfortable to teaching learning process the researcher has drawn the above table based on students respondents. According to the table, 22.9% of the respondents strongly disagree the conduciveness of the tutorial classes. Correspondingly, 26.1% of respondents disagree for the existence of conducive school environment for tutorial. In other hands, about 49% of the respondents do not agree for the existence of comfortable tutorial classes or places in their area.

In contrary, small number of students strongly agree with the existence of conducive tutorial classes in their areas. And 29.4% of respondents agree with conduciveness of tutorial classes where they take their tutor. In other hand, 39.2% of the respondents admitted the presence of conducive tutorial classes in their areas. Different from the above motion, 11.8% of students answer neither of agree nor disagree for the question asked.

The above table mainly targeting to know how far the ODL centers are close to learners' village. As it has been clearly portrayed above still students are reached to the center after they crossed long road to attend tutor and other services. Even if different challenges are expected during students travel long road to get tutor or other services, in many areas there is no teachers as well tutor service due to distance as it will be discussed in the coming pages. Based on St. Mary's CODL tutorial schedule, tutor service gives once per a quarter. Let's see how far the tutors are effective and supportive in helping students to attain the

objective of the lesson.

Table 7. The significance of ODL's tutor

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
The tutor is supportive to understand module	strongly disagree	36	14.7
	Disagree	100	40.8
	Strongly agree	49	20.0
	Agree	48	19.6
	I don't know	12	4.9
	Total	245	100.0

Based on the table, 14.7% of students strongly disagree about the supportiveness of the ODL tutor to cover as well as understand the module. Majority of students have doubt over the supportive role of the tutor in covering the content of the module.

In contrast to the above idea 20% of the respondents strongly agree about the supportiveness tutorial in understanding and attaining objective of the modules. Similarly, 19.6% of respondents support the decisive role of the tutor in covering and understanding of the given module within the given time. But small number of participants whom is 4.9% of the total participants abstain to define the tutor either supportive or not to enable students attain the objective of the module.

As the above table depicts well, majority of students do not believe that tutor time and the content of module given is balanceable. Students reason out that the tutor given once in each quarter for the learners is not supportive enough due to the following reasons:

- **Sometimes, tutors do not deliver totally on certain ODL areas.** Significant number of students criticize the University for its Unable to hold the tutor on time.
- **Some subjects do not get tutorial coverage.** As of students viewed that during the tutor time, some subjects exempted without tutor. Which means for some subject's teachers may not be assigned. The researcher has proofed the respondents' view true during his observation of tutorial classes.
- **Negligent teachers are the reason for the low coverage of the module.** Not all but some teachers are not interested or committed in briefing the module within the given time.

Besides to the above idea, the administrative stuffs also blamed students' declined interest even in attending the tutor classes. As the interviewees underlined boldly, majority students' interest and reason

to attend ODL program is critically controversial; especially students’ objective and aspiration to having certificate with good result is their primary need. Against to this, majority of students do not properly attend in tutorial classes and in the same time do not work their continuous assessment genuinely, however they need always good”. The justification they have for their illicit demand is the unlawful evaluation system and money-oriented approach of other higher private universities. Anyway, let us see students’ response about whether tutors are administered on their center on the right time, by the right teacher and in the meaningful and fruitful ways.

Table 8. Manageability of tutors

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Did tutors administer on time and by the right teacher in meaningful and fruitful way?	Yes	89	36.3
	No	155	63.3
	Total	244	99.6
Missing	System	1	.4
Total		245	100.0

Based on the table drawn above, 36% of the respondents answered “yes” for the question. However, majority of the respondents refute the existence of well-organized tutors in their areas.

Simultaneously, during the in-depth interview, the interviewees have admitted as there is some capacity shortage which is beyond the universities power to do to deliver tutors in all branches of Ethiopia. Some reasons for the above were the luck of teachers, difficult to manage tutors with dispersed students setting manner and politically unsecured conditions in peripheral areas of the country. Nevertheless, according to the administrative stuffs of the CODL have expressed the university’s effort in facilitating tutors in center areas for the dispersed demographic setting. Therefore, students from very isolated areas should come across many kilometers to attend the tutors and other programs of ODL. This also exposed the learners to further expenditure.

Table 9. Distance and expenditure

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
No extra expenditure because of distance	Strongly disagree	88	35.9
	Disagree	61	24.9
	Strongly agree	56	22.9
	Agree	32	13.1
	Total	237	96.7
Missing	System	8	3.3
Total		245	100.0

According to the above table 60.8% of the respondents have been exposed for further expenditure due to distance between their village and the St. Mary University. From whom, 35.9% of the respondents strongly disagree for the question, whereas, 24.9% of the respondents slightly agree as distance has significant impact for further expenditure on students. In other hand, 36% of the respondents claimed distance has no impact for further expenditure in their education period. But the rest 3.3% of the respondents did not give answer for the question.

The most serious complain of students about distance matter was the issue of module delivery to the learners especially to the remote area students. According to students view, sometimes they enforced to sit on exam without reading anything due to inaccessibility of educational materials.

3.2.2 Technology based challenges

Technology based challenges refers to the challenges that would encountered the university while they try to implement ICT for ODL program.

Table 10. Internet accessibility for learners

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Is there internet access in your area	No internet access	36	14.7
	Hardly access	36	14.7
	Strong internet access	68	27.8
	Fragile internet access	97	39.6
	Total	237	96.7
Missing	System	8	3.3
Total		245	100.0

Based on the above table, 14.7% of the respondents have no internet access at all. Similarly, on the above figure shows that 14.7% of respondents rarely accessed to internet connection. Generally, 29.4 % of the respondents almost had no internet access. In other words, the internet access in this area is inconsistent and not functional to do something download or upload.

In contrary to the above fact, 27.8% off the respondents have strong internet connection in their area. Greatest number of students answered as they have fragile internet access. Figuratively, 39.6% of the respondents are accessed to fragile internet access.

To sum up, it's only 27.8% of the respondents are accessed to strong internet connection which enables students to download and at the same time to upload their assignment or other educational materials. Therefor the rest around 72% of students should visit the nearby towns or other options to get internet access.

Based on the in-depth interview managed with the administrative stuffs, the fragile internet connection in the country is not reliable to implement ICT for ODL program. According to them, ODL program is constitute of planned and scheduled in to quarters. So, with this inconsistent and fragile internet connection, it's almost impossible to implement ICT based ODL program.

In considering the above data, the researcher has asked the questionnaire respondents whether employing ICT is possible in ODL program with the current Ethiopian internet technology. Let's see what would be students' response:

Table 11. Pupils' experience about readiness of ICT for ODL

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
It's possible to employ ICT with the current country's ICT status	strongly disagree	62	25.3
	Disagree	96	39.2
	strongly agree	25	10.2
	Agree	48	19.6
	don't know	12	4.9

As the above table depicts that 25.3% of the respondents strongly disagree the motion to employ ICT technology for ODL program with the current ICT status of the country. And 39.2% of the respondents also disagree with the idea to employ ICT with the current country's technological status.

Unlike to the above idea, 10.2% of the respondents strongly agree as it could be possible to employ ICT for ODL program with Ethiopia current technological status. Likewise, to this, 19.6% of the respondents forwarded the same idea as it's possible to implementing ICT for ODL program. However, 4.9% of the respondents do not know the current ICT level of the country and to decide whether it's possible or not to employ ICT for ODL program.

To sum up, the majority respondents believed that employing ICT technology with the current Internet connection in the country is impossible. The in-depth interview participants also assured the views of the questionnaire respondents.

Besides to the above idea, according to the interviewees, students' level of understanding and experience of using internet technology also another big challenges to practice ICT for ODL program.

Table 12. Students' knowledge and accessibility to ICT

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Students are capable enough in knowledge and material to use ICT to CODL	very disagree	40	16.3
	Disagree	76	31.0
	very agree	28	11.4
	Agree	80	32.7
	don't know	21	8.6
	Total	245	100.0

Here the researcher wants to know student's skill and experience to use ICT for educational purpose. So

based on the above table, 16.3% of the respondents answered that students have serious knowledge and material problem to use ICT for their ODL program. Alike to this, 31% of the respondents believe that students were not capable enough in knowledge and experience to use ICT for their ODL program. In aggregation, 47.3% of respondents believed that students have lack of knowledge and material to implement ICT in ODL program. So based on their view, students at least should take short term training or manual of how-to ICT for ODL.

In contrast to the above idea, 11.4% of the respondents believed that students are very capable enough both in material and knowledge to ICT for ODL program. For them the issue of knowledge and material is not a big deal or couldn't be barriers to implement ICT program. In the same way, 2.7% of the respondents agree to the motion that students are capable enough in knowledge and material to use ICT for their ODL program if it's going to be implemented normally to ODL program.

Totally, 44.1% of the respondents believed that students are possessed basic knowledge and material to use ICT in their ODL program. In contrast to both ideas, 8.6% of the respondents do not know about the current students' ability to define whether students are capable enough for ICT technology practice for their ODL program.

Interview participants described that ODL learners have knowledge and economical gaps to use ICT for their education purpose. Of course, the interviewees don't deny of students deficiency of knowledge and experience of using updated ICT for their education. But the interviewee also seriously underlined students' interest/motivation to use ICT products for their education beyond the above mention issues. According to Interview participants, if students have interest/motivation to use technology, it's easy even to learn how to use internet or other technology for ODL with no much up and down. However, students are not interested in, even to use soft-copy educational materials which is uploaded by CD. But still they hoped that student's attitude or interest in technology use for ODL would be change over time.

3.2.3 Market based challenges

Market based challenges refers to the peoples and organizations' demand towards St. Mary University's ODL service and interest to hire graduate students as well as students competency to win vacancy opportunity on the market.

Table 13. Students’ reliance for ODL

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Existing ODL program is competent enough to produce competent students	strongly disagree	40	16.3
	Disagree	84	34.3
	Strongly agree	44	18.0
	Agree	73	29.8
	I don’t know	4	1.6
	Total	245	100.0

As you can observed from the above table students have various perception towards the ODL competency in producing quality generation. For example, 16.3% of the respondents strongly disagree with the competency of current ODL program to produce competent students/generation. Similarly, the largest number of respondents also disagree that current ODL program is competent enough to produce qualified students. In general, 50.6% of respondents believed that the ODL program still need to be improve in many ways to be competent enough to produce quality students in the market. Which means students still doubt about the quality of education through ODL. But, not small number of students believed that the current ODL program is competent enough to produce quality students. Among this group, 18% of the respondents are strongly agree with the hypothesis of currently ODL program is competent enough to produce qualified students; and 29.8% of the respondents agree with the idea of the current ODL is capable enough to produce quality generation. Nevertheless, their degree of believe varied towards the capability of ODL program in producing quality students, 47.8% of respondents agree with as the current ODL program able to produce quality students for the market. But few numbers of respondents answered don’t know to judge what is the current ODL program in producing quality students.

Corresponding to the questionnaire survey result, the interview participants also supported the present of illegal certificate retailer. Not all but many private universities involved in registration of students and allow students to graduate before they finish all the necessary requirements.

Table 14. Students’ perception towards ODL

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
In Ethiopia, ODL is appropriate to make quality education accessible for all citizens	strongly disagree	40	16.3
	Disagree	69	28.2
	Strongly agree	52	21.2
	Agree	80	32.7
	don’t know	4	1.6
	Total	245	100.0

Based on the hypothesis drawn in the table, 16.3% of the respondents strongly disagree with the ODL program is proper to make quality education accessible for all citizens. In similar way, 28.2% of the respondents did not agree with the hypothesis which is claimed that currently ODL is proper program to make quality education accessible for all citizens. Even if the degree of their disagreement is varied, 46.5% of respondents do not believe currently ODL program is proper enough to make accessible quality education for all citizens in Ethiopia.

Unlike to the above idea, 21.2% of the respondents strongly agree with the ODL program is the precise way to make quality education accessible for all citizens. In the same way, 32.7% of the respondents agree with ODL program is proper enough to deliver quality education for all citizens. Totally, 53.9% of the respondents believed that ODL can be good way to reach quality education for Ethiopian citizens. But the rest 1.6% of the respondents answered “don’t know to the drawn question”.

No question, regardless of students’ personal interest and goal, ODL is another option to deliver quality education for all. Similarly, the interview participants has expressed their hope towards ODL program. Of course, the peoples’ outlook for ODL and technological application needs more improvement.

Table 15. ODL students’ competency for market

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
ODL program can produce as competent as regular educational program is.	strongly disagree	28	11.4
	Disagree	64	26.1
	strongly agree	57	23.3
	Agree	88	35.9
	I don’t know	4	1.6
	Total	241	98.4
Missing	System	4	1.6
Total		245	100.0

The aim of the above table is to know ODL students’ competency on the market in comparison to regular, summer, extension and other program students. Surprisingly, significant number of respondents do not believed that ODL program students are competent enough for market in front of other programs graduated students. Nevertheless, majority of respondents supposed that ODL graduated students have equal chance to compete and win job opportunities with other program graduated students. Statistically, 11.4% of respondents strongly believed that ODL students are incompetent in the market in comparison to other regular, summer and extension programs. By the same token, 26.1% of respondents agreed that ODL students can’t compete with other students in the vacancy market. Generally, whatever the degree of their stance towards ODL is varied, 37.5% of the respondents do not have reliance over ODL program in producing competent enough scholars compare to other programs.

In contrast to the above idea, 23.3% of the respondents have a strong confidence over ODL program can produce very competent professionals indifferent from other educational programs. In the same way, 35.9% of respondents agree the idea of ODL program can produce qualified students who could compete and win with other program graduated students.

To sum up, regardless of the degree of their trust towards ODL program, 59.2% of respondents believed that there is no difference between ODL and other program graduated students towards producing competent students for the market.

3.2.4 Attitudinal challenges

Here, attitudinal challenges refer to the challenges coming from stuffs, students and the society of the country as a whole. Challenges from staffs embodied the interest, discipline and professional affectation

of both the administrative and teachers’ stuff.

Table 16. T-test of ODL Teachers’ professional discipline

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Teachers who came to evaluate students are behaviorally praised and feel responsibility	245	2.52	1.014	.068

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	Upper
Teachers who came to evaluate students are behaviorally praised and feel responsibility	10.027	244	.000	.522	.39	.65	

Test Value = 2

As the one-sample t-test portrayed that the mean value is greater than the expected value (2). In other word, the mean value 2.52 greater than 2, the test value. This shows that teachers are moderately responsible and behaviorally praised one. To see this statistically very detail, we shall see the descriptive frequency analysis.

Table 17. ODL Teachers’ professional discipline

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who came to teach & evaluate students are behaviorally praised and feel responsibility	Strongly disagree	41	16.7
	Disagree	89	36.3
	Strongly agree	61	24.9
	Agree	54	22.0
	Total	245	100.0

As you look at from the above table, 16.7% of the respondents are strongly disagree against their teachers’ good behalf and feeling of responsibility. And 36.3% of the respondents are disagree for the hypothesis of teachers are behaviorally are praised and responsible when they come to teach and evaluate students. Inversely, 24.9% of the respondents strongly support for the hypothesis, teachers are behaviorally praised

and responsible for what they do. Similarly, 22% of the respondents also agree on Teachers who came to evaluate students are behaviorally praised and feel responsibility.

Table 18. Students' educational ethics

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Students are conformed to continuous assessment's rule and regulations.	very disagree	60	24.5
	Disagree	77	31.4
	very agree	40	16.3
	Agree	56	22.9
	I don't know	12	4.9
	Total	245	100.0

As it has been clearly indicated on the above table, majority of students admitted as there is cheating among students during test or other assessment instruments held. About 55.9% of the respondents are witnessed as there is cheating during continuous assessment. In other hand 39.2% of the respondents deny the above idea and they claimed as ODL continuous assessment is evaluating students without any deceiving or cheating. Different from the above idea, 4.9% of the respondents do not know anything whether cheating exist in continuous assessment evaluation.

Based on the interview data found, only a few students were doing their continuous assignment by their own knowledge; but the majorities are dependent of others. During the observation, the researcher has checked as students were not committed for class and the assignment work.

3.2.5 Employment challenges

Here employing challenge refers to distorted image of institutions towards private higher educational institutions and ignorance to employ graduate students from private schools. Of course, this distorted image about private school is not confined to private school but also it was extended to the mass. Due to this challenges, St. Mary University sometimes used to attach the university work license together with student's degree certificate in order to resolve such kinds of challenges.

3.2.6 Private schools' illegal approach

According to St Mary university students and administrative stuffs, some private schools are working by targeting only on collecting money rather than producing quality generation. Some private universities are

neither committed to Excellency nor obey the principles and rules of ministry of education. The most ignored principles by private schools are:

- ✓ **Minima requirement of students-** for both government and private universities, there are minima university entry points, and similarly there should be subjective vertical association to attain in specific departments. However, in some private schools, these requirements are ignored purposively or irresponsibly.
- ✓ **Term of The Training-** some colleges cut the training term what is normally approved by the ministry of education.
- ✓ **Level of Training Programs** – some colleges' license may limited to train only diploma or degree levels, but some colleges train out of their license domain.
- ✓ **Types of Subjects-** there are distinguished subjects for regular, distance, etc., however some private institutions ignore this principles and attempt to deceive the government.

The above all illegal approaches are creating pressure on St. Mary University by distorting students' image and by expanding illegal and easy way approach without the necessary qualification. Students always compare St. Mary University to other universities when they meet with their friends. Then they ascribed St Mary University a name of conservative, unpopular, sadist and so on. This make St. Mary's progress slowly and full of wrestling in its attempt to maintain accessibility and quality of education through ODL.

Based on observation and in-depth interview, the researcher realized that significant number of students are in a much-distorted conception about ODL program. For them, ODL program is like a machine to produce and disseminate certificate for any registered students without the necessary evaluation and effort. Due to this, students assume St Mary University as agent to disseminate certificate. As a result of this, students do not tolerate challenges rather they look for short cut ways. During observation of tutorial classes, majority students do not attend the tutorial classes. Even some department classes found to be vacuum with no students. The observers has found teachers in class with no students during tutorial times. This implies that students seems like to wait for time to take their tempo rather than grasp knowledge or skill.

3.2.7 Lack of communicable administrative system

The other challenges the researcher observed during field data collection were miscommunication between students and registrar office. There, students from different area came to take their degree tempo. However, when their profile diagnosed in the database at end of the year, so many students found to be incomplete while they thought they are already completed all the courses. This also exposed students for time and financial wastages. In-depth interview participants admitted the existing of such types of problems and blamed students and stuff workers negligence and irresponsibility.

3.3 Opportunity of ODL

3.3.1 Technology

Here technological opportunity refers to the ICT and other related technologies which are very important to connect peoples virtually without distance barrier. According to the in-depth interview participants the internet technology opportunities can be seen in three ways.

1. The new generation have more affectation and experience to ICT. Due to their access to electronic media, the new generation is more active and interested in internet related technologies. Therefore, using this opportunity to the educational sector particularly ODL program would enable St. Mary university to widen its access to the whole parts of Ethiopia, even to east Africa.
2. Internet and electronic device accessibility is increasing from time to time. Not only people's awareness but also people's attachment with virtual technology will grow up over time. Similarly, the ODL accessibility and popularity would grow up too if it is assisted by ICT.
3. Best practices related to technology applications in other world can be road map to apply easily in Ethiopia.

3.3.2 Growing number of students

Previously, Ethiopian peoples were highly dependent over governmental universities and regular program. Students who were graduated in distance program had less demand in the market. But now the situation is under changing. Except few sectors, peoples regardless of the program and the institution graduated from, have equal chance to compute and wine job vacancy. Besides this, attending their education through ODL make students advantageous in time and economical saving particularly to those who are already established a family. Due to this students number would mounted up in the future. Therefore make ready St. Mary University in many ways, particularly in virtual technology would make the university among wanted one and accessible for all without distance barriers.

3.3.3 People's growth of interest in ODL

Internet users' growth in device and knowledge

According to the interview, people's access and users number is increasing from time to time. Based on this premises, the researcher has asked whether they use social websites or not in order to know the number of internet user and similarly to understand the future tendency of students' involvement in ICT technology.

Table 19. Learners experience using ICT

Question	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Do you use social websites?	Yes	207	84.5
	No	38	15.5
	Total	245	100.0

As it has been clearly depicted on the above table, surprisingly 15.5% of the respondents don't use any social websites. In other words from 2008 ODL registered students, 15.5% of students do not use social websites. But 84.5% graduate students are using social websites.

In considering the number of students who do not use social websites, it may be frustrating to employ ICT technology for ODL program, but we should not forget that the number of users will increase and the number of students who do not use social websites also will decline over time.

Good public image of St. Mary University

The researcher has had rough meeting with students in order to know their outlook towards St. Mary University in contrast to other private universities. Based on students view, the researcher was able to know the following things about the university.

- **St, Mary University is irreconcilable for illegal works related to other private schools:** of course the researcher realized that propels' outlook towards private school is yet immature and need serious struggle against irresponsible activities in private schools. The investigator heard students when grumbling St. Mary University for its strict bureaucracy and ignorance for illegal work. I have asked them why they grumbling the university. Their reason was not fair rather than that was their wishing St. Mary University to be open for corrupt system like other private institutions. Let see one comic events happened in St. Mary University during the data collection time.

... *He is from Somali region. He was just come to St. Mary University to take his degree temporary. He come up with two blankets to present bribe for somebody in exchange for his temporary. Then he bring his friend to look for a person who can receive the bribe in exchange for degree temporary. But he couldn't find anybody who can receive his blankets...*

This person's attempt of compromising his degree certificate in exchange of bribe is developed from his background and his friends experience in other private universities. Simultaneously, during interview program with stuffs they have been telling me similar stories and students illegal

tendency.

- **St. Mary university students are more competent in the market:** I have asked students where they want to resume their master degree program if they able to get scholarship opportunity. Majority students still want to learn in St. Mary university even though they grumbling the university for being dogmatism. As they justified that students who graduated from St. Mary University are more competent than other private school graduate students. Students believed that in the future private organizations and unemployed graduates would increase, and also people's rational choice would grow up, then the corrupted system wouldn't have more position in the country. So whatever learning in St. Mary University is hard, they sought after graduation they are the winners.
- **A university hates illegality.** Both students and the university administrative stuffs witnessed that St. Mary University never work for business on the expense of HERQA's principles.

3.3.4 The country's tendency to privatization

Now in the country, the likely shift from government owned of everything to private owned system has been growing fast. This opportunity would have to increase the pace of peoples' positive outlook and reliance on higher private universities.

Besides to this, now the ministry of education is developing educational road map which seems like support for the implementation of ICT. If it could be so, the government will give serious attention for the plantation of further internet and electric power substations. Then St. Mary University would not be more challenged over the blackout of internet and electric power.

3. CONCLUSION

To reach over this conclusion, in-depth interview, questionnaire, non-participatory observation and related literatures played conglomerate role. Perhaps this paper is the extension of the researcher's previous work entitled by "accessibility and quality education through ODL". Under previous paper of the researcher, the issue of accessibility and quality of education exclusively discussed and forwarded proper recommendation. Extended from the former work, under this paper, the investigator has observed what are the challenges and opportunities would face the university while try to maintain quality and accessibility of education through ODL. Therefore, in considering of the previous and present work, the following conclusion drown accordingly.

- ✓ Generally, 245 graduate students has been participated for questionnaire tool. From who, 62.4% of the participants were males and the rest 37.6% of the respondents were females. From the whole

participants, the leading age group was under the range of 25-30, whose share from the total figure is 63.3%.

Based on the researcher observation, in-depth interview and questionnaire survey, the researcher has identified the challenges and then the opportunities on the base of distance, market, attitude and ICT related issues.

- ✓ Because of distance the following short comes have been identified
 1. Challenges to deliver educational materials to ODL students on the right time.
 2. difficulty to administer tutorial services on its time by the proper instructors
 3. limitation to control evaluation program because of distance
 4. Wastage of time and finance because of distance.
- ✓ Technology based challenges
 1. low internet access in many areas of the country
 2. low ICT use knowledge and experience of the society
- ✓ Market based challenges
 1. employment challenges
 2. illicit activity in some private educational institutions
- ✓ Attitudinal challenges
 1. societies wrong perception of ODL
 2. students low integrity to accept orders and principles
 3. lack of responsibility and passionate among students and staffs of the university
 4. Sense of shortsightedness in some private institution and even assigned individuals from government quality education regulatory agents.

Opportunity

- growth of public interest in ODL
- up growing number of students for ODL learning
- the new generation active involvement and linkage with ICT
- the country's tendency to virtual education
- the good name of the university related to its commitment for quality education

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6. And how you cop up with the challenges?

7. What are your suggestion for the university you have based on your experience to improve for the better of the coming generation?

8. Do you think you are an advantageous because of you learned in St. Mary University? 1. Yes
2. No

If you answer “yes” please write your reasons

9. Please say something about the society’s perception on ODL education in general and CODL of St. Mary University in particular regards to quality education

Is there anything else you would like us to know about the challenges and opportunities of ODL that we may not have asked you and that you think are very important?

Appendix B

In-depth interview

The initial points of the in-depth interview

1. Challenges in Line With:

- Distance
 - Technology
 - Attitude
 - Market
2. Opportunities in Line With:
3. Distance
- Technology
 - Attitude
 - Market

Appendix C

Non-Participatory observation check list

- 1, registrar office data recording system
- 2, observe students interest in tutorial classes
- 3, observe classes whether teachers and students attain on time.
- 4, check exam ethics of students

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