Attitude of Grade III A Teachers towards joining the Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teacher Education of the Open University of Tanzania: Empirical Evidence from Katavi Region

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the public attitude towards the Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teachers Education (ODPTE) of the Open University of Tanzania in Katavi region. The study employed a case study design and applied a qualitative approach. With a sample of 113, the study involved participants ranging from the OUT-Staff, Regional Administrative Secretary, Region Education Officer, District Executive Directors, District Education Officers, Ward Education Officers, Head Teachers, Other Teachers, Students and Graduates. Interview method was used for data collection and themes were used as a base for data analysis. The findings revealed that many Grade (III) A teachers had information about the ODPTE programme as compared to the rest of the community. Student-teachers knew about ODPTE from the fellow teachers. The findings indicated that Grade III A teachers were motivated to join the programme to improve knowledge, attract salary increments, pedagogical development and strengthen their CVs. Others reasons, were further study, family care and affordable cost. The findings also revealed that there was a shortage of learning materials, library, difficult to secure permit for face-to-face sessions conducted at zona level, long distance from the regional Centre and ICT issues. It was concluded that public attitude on ODPTE is mixed because of limited information about OUT, ODL and the ODPTE programme. Limitations of information is attributed to media, content and language use on the issues related to ODL, OUT and ODPTE. The study recommended that the OUT should prepare the learning materials to communicate with employers for awareness of the programme, to open sub-centres in councils and the improvement of the regional Centre library.

Keywords: Tanzania, Attitude, Distance Education, Distance learning

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on a study on challenges facing primary education in Tanzania and its dynamics in teachers' capacity building efforts. The paradigm shifts in teacher training in the medium and long–term demand for teachers have created a need for new approaches to ensure that efficiency gains are maximized. Low teacher quality is one of the causes of poor performance in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) (URT, 2006/2007). The government through the current reforms aimed at improving in-service training by establishing the 'Teachers Resource Centre' (URT 2006). The Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) 2002-2006 articulated the vision of Universal Primary Education within the wider Tanzania Policy frameworks of the Education and Training Policy, the Education Sector Development Program, the Local Government Reform Programme, the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Vision 2025. Building capacity within the education system was one of the four components of PEDP.

Others included expanding enrolment, improving the quality of teaching and learning processes and strengthening the institutional arrangements that support the planning and delivery of education services. Improvement in educational quality was to be expected by strengthening the following: first, human resources in primary schools – the focus was on in–service professional development of the teachers (URT, 2006). Second, pre–service teacher training. The purpose was to rationalize and improve the quality and relevance of the training that new teachers undergo. Other areas were quality teaching and learning materials – the emphasis was on the next books and materials, the quality and relevance of the curriculum and the school environment. Also, capacity building amongst all education stakeholders such as the school's committee and communities. The Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) was established under the Government Notice No. 159, published on 26th July 1996. Currently, it is operating under the Universities Act No. 7 of 2005 and The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) Charter of 2007. ICE is the arm of the (OUT) for developing, promoting and provision of

continuing lifelong learning through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teacher Education was introduced by the Open University of Tanzania in 2009 (OUT, 2010). The Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (ODPTE) was adopted in a response to the urgent need for quality primary school teachers in Tanzania. It integrates theory with practice, with the aim of developing teachers professionally to enhance the capability to provide quality primary education (OUT, 2011). The programme trains and re-train teachers to improve the quality of teaching in primary schools and bridges teachers to higher learning (OUT, 2015). This programme enrolls primary school teachers with a minimum of Grade IIIA teachers' certificate.

It is noted that teacher's professional development constitutes an important element for quality and efficiency gains in education. Teachers are expected to be exposed to new pedagogies, methodologies and class management approaches. Therefore, the in-service training and re-training in this cadre cannot be overemphasized. The Open University of Tanzania by providing Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teachers Education is expected to expand the chance for teacher professional development through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode (OUT, 2014; 2015). Babyegeya (2002), Sutra (2006) and Mkumbo (2011) have highlighted the fact that in-service teacher training in Tanzania is organized in ad-hoc with limited access to many teachers. In 2014 for example, Tanzania mainland had 204,987 teachers where by 190,832 were Grade IIIA teachers (PMO-RALG, 2015). The number of grade IIIA and other certificates in education in public schools has grown to reach 221,306 teachers out of 306,302 (BEST, 2022). Up to year 2022, OUT has 7851 graduates through DPTE programme with only 2760 of the graduates from Tanzania, at that time. This proportional represents 1.25 % of the group in focus (OUT, 2022). Despite the fact that this is the only programme, cheap and convenient for primary teachers for the last fourteen years, the number of enrolled teachers is very low. This poises a concern as to why the enrolment rate among

teachers in primary education is still low in Tanzania given the extended network of the Open University of Tanzania across the country. Is this low rate of enrolment affected by the public attitude on the programme? Where is this attitude emerging from? Is it from the media or experiences with the programme? The purpose of this study was to examine the attitude of Grade III A teachers towards joining the Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teacher Education of the Open University of Tanzania in Katavi region. To understand better, the objective was divided into four sub questions listed as follows: What information is displayed to teachers about ODPTE programme; what is the motive of the learners to join the programme; how useful is the programme to graduates and employers; and what is the future orientation and potentials of ODPTE programme.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, a theoretical framework was built on two dimensions. One dimension focuses on elements of learners' decision to and not to join the programme under study. This dimension is explained by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The second dimension aims at capturing the public extent of the acceptability of the programme under investigation. There are two theories building this dimension are the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Attitude and Perception Theory. The two theories aimed at capturing the extent of public acceptance towards the programme under investigation. The attitude theory covers elements of attraction between the programme and the members of the community, key to this theory is making potentials for programme especially the justification to join (reason to fall for it) while the perception theory focused on addressing elements of interaction between the programme and members of the community. Elements of the interaction explored included experiences and information available for public consumption. Details on these theories and their related components under this study are briefly presented in the following sections starting with Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and then the Attitude and Perception Theory.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Martin Fishbein and Iceck Ajzen, as a model for the prediction of behavioural intention, spanning prediction of attitude and prediction of behaviour. The subsequent separation of behavioural intention from behaviour allows for explanation of limiting factors on attitudinal influence (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004; Alhamad & Donyai, 2021; Fishbein, 2009). TRA is used to predict how individual are likely behave based on their pre-existing attitudes and behavioural intentions. It is said that an individual's decision to engage in a particular behaviour is based on outcomes the individual expects will come as a result of performing the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004; Alhamad & Donyai, 2021). According to Oslon and Zanna (1993), this is a theory of attitude evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive.

The TRA is well explained by the MODE model. The MODE Model has Motivation and Opportunity as Determinant (MODE) of the attitude behaviour relation. It is explained that when both motivation and opportunity are present, behaviour will be deliberate (i.e. positive or favorable with decisions in a direction of phenomenon. When one is absent, impact on behaviour will be spontaneous (unpredictable) (Alhamad & Donyai, 2021; Fishbein, 2009). It is further argued that, in the contemporary perspectives of an attitude, people could also have mixed feelings towards an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitude towards the same object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2004; Alhamad & Donyai, 2021; Fishbein, 2009). The extreme point based on the MODE can raise from the fact that both motivation and opportunities are absent or have a negative implication making it difficult for the public to logically follow/accept the proposal. An attitude can be positive or negative in orientations towards a phenomenon when an evaluation of people, object, events, activities and ideas looked at (Oslon & Zanna, 1993). The Theory of Reasoned Action is useful in explaining and predicting reasons behind behaviour based on attitudes, norms and intentions. In the context of this, usefulness of this

theory includes gauging an orientation of the public towards a market product and/or service like ODPTE. The construct of TRA are behavioural beliefs, evaluations of outcomes based behaviour which leads to attitude, then normative beliefs, motivation to comply which leads to subjective norms. Both the attitude and subjective norm lead to intention to perform the behaviour, which results in the behaviour. TRA, however, does not account for people's perception of the power they have over their behaviour.

Attitude and Perception Theory

The second part of the theoretical framework is built by an Attitude and perception theory. Attitude and Perception theory posits that people determine their attitudes and preferences by interpreting the meaning of their own environment and experience. Key argument in this theory is that people perceive simply by using the information they receive through their senses and this is enough information for them to make sense of the world around them (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). Sensory evaluation in the context of this theory, determines what the public understands about the phenomenon and is based on what is seen, how it is felt, what is the flavor/favor and what is contained in. The feelings, on the other hand, captures touches and personality match of the item as one of the reasons to choose. Flavor and smell are other element influencing public choice of the product. In the context of this study, public rhetoric on the product determines what people are likely to know about the product. Information contained in the daily conversation reflects how much people know about the matter and hence influencing the direction of choice in relation to the product or service. Conversation in the context of this study includes content about the product, organization of contents, language carrying the message and avenues of presentation. In the context of this study, an attitude and perception of the public on the ODPTE is evaluated based on the sensory connection the programme had with the public in terms of information display and the content there-in.

Methodology

The study utilized the qualitative research approach and employed a case study design. The study sample comprised of 113 participants. They included six (6) OUT-staff, one (1) Regional Administrative Secretary, one (1) Region Education Officer, District Executive Directors (3), District Education Officers (8), 24 Ward Education Officers, 30 Head Teachers, 10 other teachers, and 30 ODPTE students and graduates. Participants were obtained through purposive sampling for OUT staff and supervisors at regional, district and ward levels; simple random sampling was used to select potential students in a group of teachers and ODPTE students. Graduates were selected using snowball procedures. Data were obtained through interviews. Interviews sessions were conducted over a period of ten months taking advantages of the social events, formal meetings, marketing sessions and academic interactions involving OUT in Katavi.

Data collected were analyzed using content, thematic and discourse analysis as applied in qualitative research approach. What is content, thematic and discourse analysis? With thematic analysis, I read through the transcripts to find the patterns in the meaning of data and developed themes. This was complimented by content analysis, which I used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Further to these, discourse analysis was applied on the way in which participants draw on differing interpretive information depending on their interpretation of the context in which my interviews took place. Discourse analysis focused on the ways language was used in the given settings in order to capture an understanding and point of view from the participants (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Lindgren, Lundman & Graneheim, 2020).

Findings and Discussion

This section presents analyses and discusses the research findings on attitude of Grade III A Teachers towards joining the Ordinary Diploma in Primary Teacher Education of the Open University of Tanzania. The data are presented in the four sections, which follow the established

themes based on the objectives of the study and research questions. The focus is on information displayed to teachers about ODPTE programme, the motives of the learners to join the programme, the usefulness of the programme for both graduates and employers and the future of the programme.

Information Displayed to the Public about ODPTE Programme

The study wanted to examine how much information was displayed to the public about the ODPTE programme; language used and if they were clear enough. One of the OUT staff while explaining marketing avenues, pointed out how the public is informed about the ODPTE programme by saying:

> ...[I]nformation on academic programmes, including ODPTE, is shared to the public through different outlets. Mainstream media (i.e. TV, Radio and Newspapers), social media – Instagram, facebook and in some cases X-spaces are used in addition to presentation in public meetings which are commonly used to share details about our programmes. There are programme displays in national events across the country (OS-4).

This statement was complemented by another participant who argued on issues of forms of messages and languages used to inform the public on the programmes offered at the Open University of Tanzania. The participant had this to say:

> *Messages are in the forms of Oral, posters and leaflets. Except for oral messages availed to mainstream media which mostly in Swahili, posters and leaflets shared as print as well as softcopies on social media are carrying English messages* (OS-2)

This response on the form and languages as shared by members of staff, matched with the concern raised by the public on the difficulties they face in decoding the message on ODPTE.

> I *have some friends who have heard about ODPTE for the first time from me. Others seem to have wrong information about it as*

> *result, partly because of English language used and limited details on program* (TE-3).

In this study, the majority of people were found to have information about the ODPTE programme while a few pointed out that they did not have the information. For those with information, the majority of them pointed that they heard this information from their fellow teachers while a few mentioned that they heard it from OUT Staffs, televisions, radios, newspapers and graduations ceremony. Very few mentioned OUT website as source of the information they have. However, most of those with information declared that the information was not clear enough. For this reason, one would argue that the language and media of advertisement employed by OUT was not suitable for the Tanzanian community.

Kannan and Tyagi (2013) discussed about the importance of advertising the brands available in the market, the variety of products and their useful. They believe that advertising is the best way to communicate to the customers. They proposed that it has to be conducted through various media types, with different techniques and ways most suited. They emphasized that it needs a lot of imagination and creativity. Advertisement usually informs the potential consumer about the products, services, their benefits and utilities. It should also persuade the consumers to purchase such products and services. According to Kannan and Tyagi (2013), the media (web-based site) for ODPTE advertisement was not enough for publicity. The rural areas where internet connectivity is poor obviously the advertisement cannot reach them. The idea was supported by Maritim (2011) who explained that ICT is power driven and that African countries have low power connectivity. He pointed out that, except for South Africa and North Africa, the urban-rural grid power connectivity was about 27% and 5% respectively. He revealed that there was low level of ICT literacy at all levels. Therefore, ICT illiteracy frustrates the potential use of web site to the community in urban and rural. In this context, there is need to have a team that is well equipped with the ODL mode of delivery systems. The best way is to

promote ODL and its advantages to both learners and employers and then promote the programmes that are found in different faculties that are provided by the Open University of Tanzania. The team should use the education stakeholders' gatherings, visit teachers at ward level, and equip them with the ODL knowledge and skills to be passed on to other teachers (potential ODPTE students). It is expected that these people can implicitly take it to the community. Consequently, the awareness about OUT and its programmes will reach the whole community. Kannan and Tyagi (2013) concluded by saying that, "advertising aimed at promoting and selling not only the tangible and physical goods, but also ideas and services".

Based on this argument, the study sells the idea of having a competent team to promote ODL and its advantages to the beneficiaries and as a task force to promote OUT. In this study, the majority of participants indicated that they got the information from Kiswahili sources, while a small part of participants got the information from both English and Kiswahili sources. Most of the participants got the information from their fellows who used much Kiswahili in their conversation. On the other hand, very few participants got the information from English sources. One participant commented:

> Language is a powerful tool for a human being to communicate with others effectively. Language has a powerful influence over people and their behaviour. This is especially true in the fields of marketing and advertisement. Therefore, the use of right and effective language both spoken and written brings success (OSt-7).

This suggests the importance and power of Kiswahili in publicity to the Tanzanian's communities. Therefore, it can be argued that the language need to be used in the advertisement of the programmes provided by the Open University of Tanzania. This argument is in connection with Kannan and Tyagi (2013) who explained the power of language and its influence over people in communication.

Motives of the Learners to Join the ODPTE Programme

The data collected from the field indicate that the majority were motivated to attend ODPTE for improvement of knowledge, salary increase, convenience (study while they were at home or handling the family) and further study or higher learning. For instance, one graduate participant commented:

> *We need higher training to grow academically, the choice for ODPTE is mainly because of its lower fees at its level compared to residential programmes, we have seen fast salary raise for those holding a diploma. For ODPTE at the Open University of Tanzania, it is easy to study, work and take care of your family while pursuing this course. Good performance on this course gives you a chance to proceed into higher education at the Open University of Tanzania or any other university* (OG-11).

Other motives mentioned by participants include affordable costs, improve professional skills and self-confidence. Arguably, this is in line with the Attitude theory that guided the study. The theory assumes that an individual's decision to engage in a particular behaviour is based on outcomes the individual expects to come as a result of performing the behaviour. It is noted here that improved knowledge, skills and salary are the outcomes attached to ODL, which motivate teachers to undertake ODPTE. These elements are the attracting components to the programme hence a reason to join ODPTE giving it a competitive advantage over other programmes in education. The inclination reasoning is supported by Ajzan and Fishbein, (1975) and Oslon and Zanna (1993) who explained that an attitude is an evaluation of an attitude object ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Kyando (2011) also highlighted aspects of Open and Distance Learning in the context of life long learning. He argued *"All the learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a person civic social and/or employment-related perspective" (page 11).* Therefore, the study agrees with the scholars'

ideas and the respondents' argument on the motivation of individuals to engage in learning, in the context of ODPTE.

Usefulness of the ODPTE Programme to Both Graduates and Employer

The findings of this study revealed that the programme has several usefulness to both graduates and employers. The majority of participants mentioned the improvement of knowledge, salary, pedagogy, job profession and upgrade for further study as the main benefits of ODPTE. Others were improvement in ICT, PSLE results, and school administration and management. This is reflected in responses like this:

> *ODPTE has helped teachers, schools, pupils as well as supervisors of educational system in many ways. For examples, teachers have improved their pedagogy, improved content mastery, gained promotion and better salaries. Schools have improved performance as a result of better teachers; graduates of ODPTE can handle ICT issues at school level with easy; and even better, ODPTE graduate fit better in the new leadership guideline, where diploma is minimum qualification to head a school* (EL-5)

A similar observation was noted from one of ODPTE graduate teacher. She noted:

> *ODPTE is not just an upgrade in teachers training; it imparts skills that are not part of many teachers training. Going through this programme, you will strengthen ICT skills and Mathematical skills through ODC 055 which is a must attend course. Inclusive and special education is another area that is emphasized to all students in addition to a leadership and management skills* (OG-3)

The findings of this study are in line with Bernard (1998) arguments as cited by Tweve (2011). The message in Benard (1998) is that despite the preparation, a professional educator has the opportunity to access preparative innovation/techniques to teach rather than recycling materials and approaches. Bernard (1998) adds that, a professional

teacher who has a defined pedagogy has already journeyed through several trials to discover which pedagogical techniques are most effective. He also explained that a professional teacher once acquiring a defined pedagogy creates autonomy for himself/herself and allowing for a partial release from the constraints constructed by either administration and school committee or parents. In this study, it is noted that one of the ODPTE potentials is that it enables, through its trainings, to handle pupils with special needs in schools. This argument was supported by Nziga (2011) who evaluated the programme performance.

As noted earlier, the possibility that learners can study while caring their families and engage in economic activities was mentioned as another benefit of ODPTE. It is argued here that by attending ODPTE at OUT, learners do not affect significantly work schedules like those who attend to conventional studies. This study notes that learners put the new knowledge in practice during the study process; teachers pursuing ODPTE can handle students with special needs. It is argued here that the two are considered as among the benefits of ODPTE. With regards to work-life integration, the finding in this study is in line with Kyando (2011). Kyando argues that learning activity undertaken through ODL, including ODPTE, is set to use work forums as a platform to harness theoretical-practical work relation and hence an aim to improve knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal civic social and/or employment-related perspective. This suggests that improvement in knowledge, skills and competences for employment-related tasks should be throughout life as far as career and professional development is concerned. Programmes such as ODPTE in the ODL setting are perfect platform for the work-learning integration. Babyegeya (2002) argued that students under teachers with long initial pedagogical training perform better than students taught by teachers who went through a crash programme. This suggests that in-service teachers should be provided with training in order to cover the gap created by low education. It is noted that teachers, as the subject of the learning process, are key to quality of performance; their professional improvement is the improvement of schools' results. Thus, it is argued here that ODPTE

programme is useful to the community and that it addresses the gap from grade IIIA training and that of technological changes; it improves school's administration and management, hence good performance at school level. As said earlier, the programme (ODPTE) gives an opportunity to Grade IIIA teachers to further their studies. This is beneficial to teachers who may use learning as a strategy to keep their positions and or elevate their entry point to employment – the higher the education the better the chance to secure employment (Kyando, 2020). Literature suggests that, following the global trend, higher education became a necessity, and a tool that everyone want to ensure it is well placed in a survival kit; OUT started to avail this tool for adult learners in an ODL mode. Therefore, it is argued here that ODPTE programme is there, as a stepping-stone to higher learning for Grade IIIA teachers who want to pursue further education.

The Future of ODPTE Programme

This section addresses issues sorted as feedback from ODPTE stakeholders on the programme for future development. These issues are extracted from student teachers pursuing ODPTE and those who graduated. One of them pointed out that:

> *ODPTE as an ODL programme has potentials to grow and accommodate good number of teachers and connect them to higher education. To achieve this, ODPTE need to address issues that limit its potentials. Issues noted and experienced include, for example, some courses do not have learning materials which are needed to support learning. There are some cases where learning materials come at delayed time; another issue compounds ICT matters ranging from limited technical knowhow in using gadgets to support learning, matters of costs to acquire ICT gadgets and unstable connectivity for internet to access learning platform* (OG- 2).

This study notes that the complaints about the lack of learning materials is not new. A similar observation was noted by Maritim, Mushi, Ng'umbi, Malingumu and Reuben (2011). They suggested that the

compendia [2]should be prepared to support learning. Based on the findings, it is suggested that learning materials should be available on time. Arguably, this will improve teachers' interests to undertake the programme. In this study, while there was an appreciation for conveniently delivered online materials via MOODLE learning platform, a call for print media was underlined for easy use, given the cost aspect attached to ICT gadgets. It is clear in this study that many people did not know how to use ICT. So, participants in the study, had an opinion that face to face sessions were important. This is in connection with Maritim (2011) who observed that there is a slow growth of ICT in Africa and mentioned some barriers including low ICT infrastructure.

Globally, African's share of world computers was 1.5% and about 2% of the world's internet users. He recalls that of this 2%, South Africa takes 75% of the internet use and North Africa had 12%. The rest of 48 countries in the continent shared the remaining 13%. He added that the situation puts limitations on the use of modern learning technologies and there is low level of ICT literacy at all levels. Limited interactions between learners and facilitators was listed as another challenge. The study findings highlighted opinion that the study manual should include active contact details such as mobile phones and emails as well as social media packages, as support to interaction. An evolution of ODPTE delivery at OUT, in the context of ODL, its potentials and limitations inclined to ICT is supported by other scholars like Mushi (2011) and Kyando (2021) among others. They argue that learning materials through mobile technologies goes hand in hand with the Hypertext and the internet. Mobile technologies can be used anywhere and anytime; this is emphasized as its core advantage. Their portability and small size of existing gadgets, efficiency and effectiveness in use and user friendly such as cell phones and iPods, are marked as favoring features.

One student had this opinion:

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[2] Compiled publications/ references to complement study materials and/or teaching notes.

> *Media of information sharing accounts for limited knowledge. On this aspect, two issues are the concern of the public. The first one is the language use; most of details on this programme is in English. The public understand Swahili presentations better. The second aspect on media is related to premise of information sharing where websites and social media are used. These media are only used by a small segment of the public. Another area that needs to be looked upon is marketing of the programme by a direct engagement with people so that hard points are explained to improve understanding on issues related to ODPTE and other programmes* (OSt- 11).

It was suggested in this study that OUT staff should meet with employers in order to have common understanding about the programme. Such meeting will enable an arrangement of how to handle teachers during examinations, microteaching and Teaching Practice. It was added that OUT should open sub-centres in the district councils for face to face and examination purposes. This proposal is based on the fact that it is difficult for teachers to get permission from their employers to attend ODPTE face to face sessions which are usually conducted at zonal level. There is also a complaint that attending these sessions in the zones add extra cost for those living and working away from zonal points. Another issue in the list of limitation is mentioned to be the ever-changing policy issues between and within programmes. One of the participants said: "*there are changes on admission conditions over time, and at time specific to ODPTE. The changes need to be communicated as wide as possible (EL- 1).* This complaint is based on the understanding that earlier on the entry qualifications were marked to be five passes of 'O' Level plus Grade IIIA certificate. The current changes on entry qualifications (Grade IIIA certificate with a teaching experience of not less than 2 years) have not reached the community and teachers; the public still largely has the old entry qualifications. Even some of the OUT staff did not know about the changes. Therefore, the team recommended for promotion of ODL; as discussed earlier, this is very important for the success of ODPTE as a programme and OUT as a delivering institution.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the Grade III A teachers had a mixed feeling towards ODPTE because of limited information about OUT, ODL and the ODPTE programme. Limitations of information are attributed to media, content and language use on the issues related to ODL, OUT and ODPTE. For a few, who have better awareness level on the programme, acknowledged that the cost to undertake ODPTE was seen lower compared to other mode of delivery; however, it is still expensive for an ordinary teacher. Once admitted for the programme, learners have experience access issue when it comes to online based interface. ICT challenges adds to limitation based on costs and technical know-how. On the other hand, graduates have experienced positives related to carrier growth in terms of salary increase and promotion into administrative position as well securing access to higher education. Other advantages are noted to be its flexibility and possibility to combine studies, work and family life.

Recommendations

- OUT, through its staff, should prepare a comprehensive information package on its programme and mode of teaching for the public to have a better understanding about the programmes, including ODPTE.

- Given the ODPTE potentials to accommodate a large number of learners, OUT needs to have a stable system of learners' support. This is due to the fact that learners, in an ODL setting, need support especially on ICT based system.

- For ODPTE purpose, OUT should open sub-centre in district councils that can be used for face-to-face sessions and examinations because of the long distance from the regional centre.

- OUT should prepare the softcopy of learning materials and its folder to be available through a mobile phone for learning

anywhere and anytime. This could be supportive to those who lack computers and those experience poor electricity connectivity in both urban and rural areas.

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