

**ASSESSING THE RECEPTIVITY OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES  
AMONG ORDINARY AND ADVANCED LEVEL STUDENTS:  
A CASE OF THE ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study was undertaken to establish Ordinary and Advanced level students' receptivity of Open and Distance Learning Programmes offered by Zimbabwe Open University. With the proliferation of several higher education institutions, which include among them the eleven universities in the country and at one polytechnic in each of the ten provinces of Zimbabwe, competition for students has become stiff as enrolments in some of these institutions continue to plummet. There was, therefore, need to establish how receptive these young adults were of the ODL mode, in light of the introduction of the Enhanced Tutorial Programme (ETP) as an innovation in the ODL system at the Zimbabwe Open University. A total of 100 student respondents made up the sample which consisted of 64 (64%) male and 36 (36%) female students whose age range was between 16 and 22 years. These were drawn from rural and urban schools located in Chegutu district. Results show that a slight majority of 56 students preferred to study with the ZOU because of their area of residence which was prohibitive for them to enrol at a conventional college. The respondents overwhelmingly rejected the notion that there was poor quality of education at the ZOU. Because ODL had a lot of flexibility and was convenient, the majority of the respondents preferred to study through the ODL mode. Some preferred the ODL mode because while some conventional institutions required above 10 points at Advanced level, ZOU only required 5 Ordinary level subjects, including English language, passed with a grade C or better. However, the most prohibitive factor as indicated by the majority of the students was lack of access and competence in the use of the internet and other forms of technology since their understanding of the ODL mode entailed the use of modern technology, which is not currently the situation at ZOU. Also inhibitive for most respondents, was the argument that there was little time for face-to-face interaction. These young adults needed to make and meet new friends and socialize with colleagues from various socio-cultural backgrounds, an adventure not always possible in ODL systems due to geographical distances apart.

**Key Words:** Open and Distance Learning, Ordinary and Advanced Level Students, Enhanced Tutorial Programme.