



# West African Journal of Education

VOL. XXXII 2012

ISSN: 0043-2997

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**The West African  
Journal Of Education  
(WAJE)**

**VOLUME XXXII**

**2012**

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# West African Journal Of Education (WAJE)

*(For enhanced quality of research and discourse on Education)*

Vol. XXXII. 2012

ISSN: 0043-2997

Website: <http://www.instituteofeducui.com>

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# COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF TWO UNIVERSITY DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH –WEST NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The challenges of ever-increasing demand for university education in the face of inadequate human and infrastructural resources and rapidly increasing population have necessitated distance learning programmes. This study evaluated Universities of Ibadan and Lagos Distance Learning Programmes. Samples of 200 participants (100 graduates, and 100 employers) were purposively selected. Two research questions guided the research. Two validated instruments with reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.86 respectively, were used to collect data. Data were analysed using chi square and independent t-test. Findings revealed that graduates of UIDLC performed significantly better than their ULDLI counterparts, in terms of class of degree obtained: a chi-square value of (1632.18) which is significant at 0.05, ( $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that there is a statistical significant difference in the performance of UIDLC distance learning education graduates and their ULDLI counterparts and it is to the advantage of UIDLC. In addition, graduates of both programmes were making similar positive impact in their work environment as the difference in their job performance is not statistically significant. The two distance learning institutions strove to achieve the objectives of providing quality education through distance learning mode and use of quality global modes of instruction in educating distance learners to enhance learner's productivity. Recommendations made were: the two institutions must aim at improving teaching-learning resources, learner-support services and establishing human resource development centres to aid develop strong and holistic human resources in order to improve quality of their graduates and also position distance education in Nigeria for international recognition.*

## **Introduction**

Distance education is one of the responses to increasing social demands for higher education in contemporary societies. The most important distinguishing characteristic is its outreach capacity, which makes it adaptable to a variety of situations in which the learner is physically, temporally and spatially separated from the teacher. That is why distance education is often described as 'anytime, anywhere' learning (Obanya, 2004). The Nigerian National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, NEEDS, (FRN 2004), stated that all citizens are entitled to education. Yet it is obvious that the spaces available in institutions of learning in Nigeria are inadequate to meet the demand for placements of prospective students. Obemeta (1985) posited that 'distance learning has always been an important means by which the people of this country have acquired educational and professional qualifications'. Ekhaguare (2005) stated that 'open distance education has provided nations with opportunities for addressing the needs for skills, training and education in a cost effective and sustainable way'. All these assertions point to the fact that we cannot over-emphasize the importance of distance education in providing access to higher education.

Bodies such as the European Union, the Commonwealth and the Southern African Development Community, among others, have accepted its significance. Governments all over the world have resorted to it as a way out of their resource incapacitation.

**Table 1: Some Countries with very large Distance Education Systems**

Country	Name of institution	Enrolment	Foundation
China	China Central Radio TV University	825,000	1997
Turkey	Anadolu University	600,000	1982
France	CNED	350,000	1939
Indonesia	Universitas Terbuka	353,000	1984
Thailand	Sukothai Thamatirat Open University	350,000	1978
India	Indira Gandhi National Open University	242,000	1985
Korea	National Open University	200,000	1972
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Open University	200,000	1969
Spain	Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia	140,000	1972
South Africa	University of South Africa	130,000	1949
Total		3,417,000	

**Source: Institutional Statistics 2005**

Table 1 shows some developed and developing countries with very large distance education system. Some of the highlights show that China Central Radio TV University CCRTVU network in China, which was founded in 1997, has the highest enrolment of 825,000 as at 1995, followed by Anadolu University which was founded in 1982 in Turkey with enrolment of 600,000 to distance education.

According to Van de Sand (2005); Almazan-Khan (2005) and Abdulaeva (2006), the world had reached an agreement to ensure education for all by 2015. To this end, nations of the world are devising appropriate policies and relevant programmes that would facilitate its realization on target. In this direction, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa; (ADEA) in its 2002 and 2003 reports, revealed that in spite of the

ever-increasing demand for education, funding of the sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, (SSA) is declining in real economic terms (ADEA, 2004). The issue of providing access to education through distance learning has therefore, gained unprecedented prominence. University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute (ULDLI) and University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) were both able to admit 20,000 and 15,522 persons respectively as at 2008. Yet the purpose of placing emphasis on distance/open education is to use it to bridge the gap in university enrolment created by the inability of conventional universities to meet the ever-increasing demand for admission (ADEA, 2004). Panda (2005) and Peters (2005) believe that management (including planning) is central to, and an essential part of distance learning. It is obvious that management of open and distance learning must be innovative and dynamic for effectiveness, because its pool of studentship is scattered all over the place (Kanshik, Garg & Dikshit 2006).

According to the prospectus of the University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute (ULDLI) (2002 – 2005) which was still in use as at September, 2008, the institute was established first as a Correspondence and Open Studies Unit (COSU) in 1973, but transformed to Correspondence and Open Studies Institute (COSIT) in 1983 as a result of its upgrading and restructuring by the University's Senate. In 1997, it was again upgraded and renamed Distance Learning Institute. With this enhanced status, it assumed the status of a college rather than of a faculty. The institute has three categories of academic staff namely: the permanent academic staff; adjunct (part-time) academic staff and associate academic staff. As of 2008, the ULDLI had thirteen full-time academic staff and about two hundred part-time academic staff. A director and a deputy director were part of the thirteen permanent academic members of staff of the institute as at September, 2008. The institute also engaged additional ad-hoc academic staff, whenever the need arose.

The institute is semi-autonomous. At its inception and for a long time, it ran courses only in education, business administration and accounting. However, it now runs (i.e. as of 2009), courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics in addition to the above mentioned courses. It also has twenty four senior non-teaching staff, and an academic board of studies and board of examiners as well as five other committees. It has its own separate building within the University Campus. The building contains a library, offices, a fairly large auditorium and some classes which are, however, insufficient for use of its students; as well as a reception for visitors and students with a Television Set and security personnel. It also runs diploma courses in Library and Information Science and in Mass Communication. On its academic staff are the director, the deputy director and eleven others drawn from diverse disciplines in the University particularly those participating in the programme. It also has a counselling unit (2002-2005 ULDLI Prospectus). Modes of instruction include printed instructional materials and contact sessions in the main. The National Universities Commission gave full accreditation to all the programmes run by the University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute.

The University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) was conceived as an External Studies Programme of the Department of Adult Education in 1972 but started operations in 1988. By 1993, it graduated its first set of students. The Centre was established with the goal of providing university education to students who are too busy, working or live too far away to attend lectures on a regular basis. It got transformed to Centre for External Studies in 1993 when more departments in the Faculty of Education started the programme, and by the year 2002 the programme got upgraded to become distance learning centre with the status of a faculty (UIDLC Prospectus, 2006 edition). However, unlike the ULDLI, the UIDLC does not have academic staff of its own, but relies entirely on those of the participating departments.

The Distance Learning Centre extended to the Faculty of Agriculture in the 1998/1999 academic session and recently, extended her programmes to Faculties of Arts, Science and the Social Sciences (2006/2007 academic session). It is also contemplating recruiting academic staff from both outside and within the University (UIDLC Prospectus 2006 Reviewed Edition). It is, however, not yet clear whether or not some will be on its permanent staff list. The organizational structure of the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre is overseen by the Senate of the University in order to enhance adequate planning programme and implementation so that the University's standard may be maintained. The Distance Learning Centre has information centres in Lagos, (Lagos State); Abeokuta (Ogun State) and Ile-Ife (Osun State) which indicates that its geographical coverage is still small. It also runs diploma courses in the Faculty of Education and in Departments of Theatre Arts and Statistics.

The main objectives of these two Distance Learning Programmes (University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute and University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre) were synchronized thus:

- ◆ Bridging the gap between actual enrolment and demand for enrolment in university education in Nigeria;
- ◆ To use global quality modes of instruction in educating distance learners;
- ◆ Utilization of innovative method of programme delivery;
- ◆ Provision of quality education through distance learning mode to enhance Distance Learner's productivity.

In comparing University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute (ULDLI) and University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC), both programmes use printed materials, face-to-face lectures on weekends, tutorials in mathematically-oriented courses and contact sessions as the major media of instruction, but they have not been able to perfect the multi-media instructional strategy. However, both Institutions make use of audio and audio-visual media which are distributed to students as parts of course materials. University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute uses *Radio Unilag* which covers only two hundred

metres radius within Lagos Metropolis while the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre has *Diamond F.M.* as its Radio Station which covers Ibadan and its environs. The University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute has its own large building with library and some lecture rooms like other faculties on the main campus and has the status of a college placing at par only with the College of Medicine, unlike its University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre counterpart, whose status is only at par with that of a faculty. The University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre has its administrative building outside the University of Ibadan Campus, and uses lecture rooms on the main campus for its contact sessions until year 2009, when it acquired more buildings outside the main campus for lectures during contact sessions.

One common problem that becomes obvious to the discerning observer of the two programmes is the reluctance of many departments of the two universities to participate in the programmes; even though they both have a long history behind them. This is unlike the situations in other countries such as South Africa, India, The U.S.A., Argentina, The U.K., Indonesia and Japan. However, from 2005/2006 academic session, Faculties of Arts, the Social Sciences, Agricultural Science and Forestry, and Science have since joined the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre programmes.

The essence of the concept of distance learning is the mode of instructional delivery to its students from a distance whereby the teacher and the taught are separated from one another most of the time, except during short contact sessions on few occasions. It is this essence that informs the increasing level of importance being given to it because it thus creates access to education for many who would have otherwise not had such opportunities. Thus, quality is an essential ingredient of DL if it were to compete favourably with the regular programme.

Obanya (2005a) viewed quality in education as a multi-dimensional concept built into and nurtured in the course of all the phases and all facets of educational development endeavours, in order to ensure that they yield the right type of fruits in a sustainable manner. According to Ekhuagere (2005), quality is a degree of excellence. He further posited that it is not a fixed, immutable target or destination. Therefore, some kind of mechanism must be put in place to define and ensure quality in any viable undertaking such as the education sector. Ekhuagere (2005) suggested that quality should be characterized by the following: fitness of purpose, fitness for purpose, value for money, transformation, perfection and excellence.

Yet, Osasona (2006), corroborating Ekhuagere, outlined five major approaches to quality as: exceptionality, consistency, fitness of purpose, value for money and transformation. However, Aworh (2005) viewed quality as the standard of excellence, that is, conformity to a given level of excellence which represents particular standards or specifications. He also states that quality can be defined in terms of teaching, learning and research



environment as well as with regards to quality of students, quality of staff and curricula. Quality can only be achieved if those trusted with various functions perform them well. Quality is usually specified with measurable indicators for comparative purposes.

According to Osasona (2006), in Nigeria, maintaining quality in the university system is not new. It started with the University of Ibadan from inception in 1948. Quality maintenance was through both internal and external processes. Such processes include student admission requirements, curriculum reviews, external examining system and accreditation by professional bodies as well as by National Universities Commission. Quality, therefore, may not always be quantifiable, yet it has a great value attached to it and can be appreciated whenever it is present in anything. It implies thus that quality can be seen and felt even though it cannot be exactly quantifiable. However, Idowu (2006), in Ogunsola (2004) stated that the quality of education should be assessed by measuring the student performance, the role of the teachers in the enhancement of quality, adequacy of the teaching-learning environment, instructional time, and head's leadership style. There is no gainsaying, therefore, that in the modern parlance much importance is attached to whatever is qualitative, though no exact value can be objectively attached to it, because such value would definitely vary from person to person and even if some values had been agreed upon then scoring becomes a problem as it would vary from one person to another. However, the weighted average of such ratings becomes the fairly acceptable measure to gauge the quality of the object under consideration. Evaluation assists in proper measuring of outcomes of educational programme.

The evaluation of any programme entails that at least a model should be employed as guide to its proper and appropriate evaluation (Bhola, 1990). He further posited that evaluation can be conducted at various levels of understanding and sophistication. He asserted that the use of experimental design and highly sophisticated statistical techniques is not a guarantee for good evaluation. This implies that the process of, and the thoroughness with which the evaluation is carried out, ensure good evaluation outcome. Obemeata (1985) asserted that evaluating distance learning programme entails delineating the purpose of the evaluation. He states that this is so because the purpose would define the method to be employed. Obemeata further stressed that evaluation has four major purposes: decision to be taken about the programme commencement, making final judgment about the distance learning programme, contributing to decision to guide the improvement of a distance learning programme and obtaining evidence for the purpose of promoting a cause.

There are fluctuations in the two distance learning graduates' performance and their productivity respectively. While performance rates ought to have been on the increase to improve the quality of graduates of the programmes, this has not been the case. There is therefore the need to examine the programmes in some important ramifications, in order to find ways in which they can effectively play their roles in improving on the

productivity of their graduates. Existing literature shows only case studies rather than comparative study of at least any two of such existing programmes, by which they can learn from each other. Therefore, it becomes imperative to carry out a comparative evaluation research of quality and impact of the University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute and the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre graduates in terms of their academic and post-graduation job performance. The utilization of the results of this study would further move the institutions closer to the achievement of their set objectives as well as improve quality. Making a meaningful impact on the society will equally enhance access to distance learning programmes in Nigeria and further reduce the level of illiteracy in the country.

Distance learning has become an alternative means of education globally. Yet, its graduates' performance is not encouraging in Nigeria, as the programmes are yet to catch up in terms of some aspects that can enhance quality, hence the need therefore, to seek ways of improving both the quality and impact of Distance Learning Programmes in Nigeria and the need for a comparative study of at least, two of such programmes. It is on this note that the present study undertook comparative evaluation of the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre and the University of Lagos Distance Learning Institute Education programmes with respect to academic and post-graduation job performance of the graduates of the two Distance Learning programmes respectively in terms of the quality of their productivity.

### **Research questions**

Based on the stated problem, the study provided answers to two research questions:

1. What are the comparative qualities of the two distance learning programmes in terms of class of degree attained by their graduates?
2. What is the impact of the two distance learning programmes on the post-graduation job performance of their graduates?

### **Methodology**

Research designs

This study is an ex-post facto survey research and it adopted Input-Output evaluation model.

### **Population**

The target population for the study comprised all education graduates of the two distance learning institutions from 1996/97 to 2005/2006 academic sessions. Their employers constituted the employers' sample.

### **Sampling technique and sample**

Purposive sampling technique was employed in this study and graduates of the two distance learning programmes from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 sessions that the

researchers were able to trace to their places of duty (not less than 50 graduates from each of the distance learning institution) were purposively used for the study since it was very difficult to locate them after graduation and their employers constituted the employers' sample set. The sample consisted of 100 education graduates of the two distance learning programmes and 100 employers of the distance learning graduate. In all, a total number of 200 participants were involved in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

The two research instruments used for data collection in the study are Inventory on Selected Students' Characteristics (ISSC) and Questionnaire on the Effectiveness of the Distance Learning Graduates Before and After Graduation (QEDLGBAG). Inventory on Selected Students' Characteristics format was designed by the researchers and provided information on graduation by year and classes of degree (distance learning education students only) from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 academic sessions, while the second instrument which is Questionnaire on the Effectiveness of the Distance Learning Graduates Before and After Graduation was adapted from Ayodele, Araromi, Emeke and Adegbile (2006) to elicit information on the impact of the two distance learning programmes on their graduates. It has four sections namely: Sections A, B, C and D with a total of 65 items. It was revalidated by the researcher on a similar sample of 30 employers and 30 graduates of distance learning institution that were not included in the study, having the reliability of 0.86 respectively.

### **Data collection procedure**

Data were collected with the help of six trained research assistants

### **Data analysis**

Data collected were analyzed using Chi Square and Independent t-test.

### **Results**

Research question one: What are the comparative qualities of the two distance learning programmes in terms of class of degree attained by their graduates?

**Results****Table 2: Proportions of UIDLC Distance Learning Education Graduates by class of degree attained from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 Academic Sessions**

Academic Sessions	2nd Class Upper	Prop.	2nd Class Lower	Prop.	3rd Class	Prop.	Pass	Prop.	Total
1996/1997	81	0.259	230	0.735	2	0.006	*	*	313
1997/1998	56	0.165	281	0.829	2	0.006	*	*	339
1998/1999	62	0.278	159	0.713	2	0.009	*	*	223
1999/2000	30	0.270	64	0.577	*	*	17	0.153	111
2000/2001	27	0.124	182	0.835	*	*	9	0.041	218
2001/2002	21	0.160	101	0.771	5	0.038	4	0.030	131
2002/2003	40	0.141	207	0.731	7	0.025	29	0.102	283
2003/2004	15	0.200	56	0.747	2	0.027	2	0.027	75
2004/2005	188	0.229	595	0.726	20	0.024	16	0.019	819
2005/2006	272	0.301	595	0.659	20	0.022	16	0.018	903
<b>Total</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>0.231</b>	<b>2470</b>	<b>0.723</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0.018</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>0.027</b>	<b>3415</b>

Source: UIDLC Records

Table 3: Proportions of ULDLI Distance Learning Education Graduates by class of degree attained from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 Academic Sessions

Academic Sessions	2nd Class Upper	Prop.	2nd Class Lower	Prop.	3rd Class	Prop.	Pass	Prop.	Total
1996/1997	3	0.015	97	0.483	100	0.498	1	0.005	201
1997/1998	7	0.038	71	0.383	100	0.541	7	0.038	185
1998/1999	7	0.045	60	0.389	75	0.487	12	0.078	154
1999/2000	2	0.031	32	0.500	21	0.328	9	0.141	64
2000/2001	1	0.019	29	0.537	19	0.352	5	0.093	54
2001/2002	1	0.020	10	0.196	30	0.588	10	0.196	51
2002/2003	*	0	10	0.222	27	0.600	8	0.178	45
2003/2004	4	0.210	6	0.316	6	0.316	3	0.158	19
2004/2005	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2005/2006	2	0.091	3	0.136	16	0.727	1	0.045	22
Total	27	0.034	318	0.4	394	0.496	56	0.070	795

Source: ULDLI Records

**Table 4: Performance of UIDLC Education Graduates From 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 Academic Sessions**

Years		2 <sup>nd</sup> Class upper	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class lower	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Pass	Total	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig
1996/1997	Count	81	230	2	0	313	244.24	0.00
	Expected	72.6	226.4	5.5	8.5	313.0		
1997/1998	Count	56	281	2	0	339		
	Expected	78.6	245.2	6.0	9.2	339.0		
1998/1999	Count	62	159	2	0	223		
	Expected	51.7	161.3	3.9	6.1	223.0		
1999/2000	Count	30	64	0	17	111		
	Expected	25.7	80.3	2.0	3.0	111.0		
2000/2001	Count	27	182	0	9	218		
	Expected	50.8	158.4	3.8	6.0	218.0		
2001/2002	Count	21	101	5	4	131		
	Expected	30.1	94.0	2.3	3.5	131.0		
2002/2003	Count	40	207	7	29	283		
	Expected	65.6	204.7	5.0	7.7	283.0		
2003/2004	Count	15	56	2	2	75		
	Expected	17.4	54.2	1.3	2.0	75.0		
2004/2005	Count	188	595	20	16	819		
	Expected	189.9	592.4	14.4	22.3	819.0		
2005/2006	Count	272	595	20	16	903		
	Expected	209.4	653.1	15.9	24.6	903.0		
Total	Count	792	2470	60	93	3415		
	Expected	792.0	2470.0	60.0	93.0	3415.0		

The table shows a chi-square value (244.24) which is significant at 0.05, ( $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that there is a significant difference in the performance of U.I. distance learning education graduates 1996/1997 and 2005/2006 academic sessions.

**Table 5: PERFORMANCE OF ULDLI EDUCATION GRADUATES FROM 1996/1997 TO 2005/2006 ACADEMIC SESSIONS**

Academic Sessions		2 <sup>nd</sup> Class upper	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class lower	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Pass	Total	$\chi^2$	Df	P
1996/1997	Count	3	97	100	1	201	98.53	24	.000
	Expected	6.8	80.4	99.6	14.2	201.0			
1997/1998	Count	7	71	100	71	185			
	Expected	6.3	74.0	91.7	13.0	185.0			
1998/1999	Count	7	60	75	12	154			
	Expected	5.2	61.6	76.3	10.8	154.0			
1999/2000	Count	2	32	21	9	64			
	Expected	2.2	25.6	31.7	4.5	64.0			
2000/2001	Count	1	29	19	5	54			
	Expected	1.8	21.6	26.8	3.8	54.0			
2001/2002	Count	1	10	30	10	51			
	Expected	1.7	20.4	25.3	3.6	51.0			
2002/2003	Count	0	10	27	8	45			
	Expected	1.5	18.0	22.3	3.2	45.0			
2003/2004	Count	4	6	6	3	19			
	Expected	0.6	7.6	9.4	1.3	19.0			
2005/2006	Count	2	3	16	1	22			
	Expected	0.7	8.8	10.9	1.5	22.0			
Total	Count	27	318	394	56	795			
	Expected	27.0	318.0	394.0	56.0	795.0			

The table shows a chi-square value (98.53) which is significant at 0.05, ( $p < 0.05$ ). This shows that there is a significant difference in the performance of ULDLI Education Graduates between 1996/1997 and 2005/2006 academic sessions

**Table 6: Comparisons of Academic Performances of UIDLLC and ULDLI Education Graduates**

Institutions		2 <sup>nd</sup> Class upper	2 <sup>nd</sup> Class lower	3 <sup>rd</sup> Class	Pass	Total	X <sup>2</sup>	Sig
UIDLC Count		792 664.3	2470 2261.5	60 368.3	93 120.9	3415 3415.0	1632.18	0.00
Expected ULDLI Count		27 154.7	318 526.5	394 85.7	56 28.1	795 795.0		
Expected								
Total Count		819 819.0	2788 2788.0	454 454.0	149 149.0	4210 4210.0		
Expected								

The table shows that there is a significant difference in the class of degree obtained by ULDLI and UIDLC graduates from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 academic sessions [ $\chi^2_{(3)} = 1632.18, P = < 0.05$ ]. The table further reveals the number of graduates that obtained 2<sup>nd</sup> class upper division from UIDLC (792) and ULDLI (27). For 2<sup>nd</sup> class lower UIDLC produced 2,470 graduates while ULDLI produced 318. However, ULDLI has majority of her graduates obtaining 3<sup>rd</sup> class (394) as against UIDLC which has 60. In like manner, UIDLC produced 96 graduates for Pass category while ULDLI produced 56.

**Table 7: Independent t -test of the significant difference in means of UIDLC and ULDLI Education Graduates post-graduation job performance**

Variables	Name of institution	N	Mean	SD	SEM	T	Df	P value
Post-graduation job performance of graduates	UIDLC	50	158.54	5.74	.81	-.028	98	.977
	ULDLI	50	158.58	8.09	1.14			

Remarks: Not Significant at  $P > 0.05$



The result in table 7 shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the post-graduation job performance of the two distance learning programmes education graduates from the perspectives of their employers. UIDLC has a mean score of 158.54 while ULDLI has a mean score of 158.58. ( $t\text{-cal.} = -.028$ ,  $Df = 98$ ,  $P < .977$ ). Thus, the observed difference in their mean scores is not strong to make a significant difference. Hence, graduates of both programmes are making similar positive impact in their work environment in job performance.

### Discussions

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 present the number of UIDLC and ULDLI distance learning education graduates by class of degree attained and their proportion from 1996/1997 to 2005/2006 academic sessions respectively. It is pertinent to note that while UIDLC was able to produce 3,415 distance learning Education graduates within this period, ULDLI was only able to graduate 795 within the same ten years as stated above. It was also discovered from the findings, that the ULDLI institution has many more candidates in other disciplines than Education Science such as Accounting and Business Administration which constitute the major population of distance learning programmes with the current enrolment of almost 20,000 distance learners as at 2007/2008 session and 6,231 graduates between 1994/1995 and 2003/2004 academic sessions. If the number of Education distance learning graduates should be deducted from the total number of graduates in recent academic years in ULDLI, it is evident that the difference will be very wide. This is as a result of the dwindling enrolment figure for distance learning Education students encountered by ULDLI. For instance, in 1996/1997 academic year at ULDLI, out of the 582 distance learning graduates produced, Education graduates were 201. This is commendable, but between 1998/1999 and 2002/2003 academic sessions, the number of distance learning Education graduates dropped drastically on a yearly basis such that out of 461 graduates of 1999/2000, only 64 education distance learning students were able to graduate, and this has been the pattern of graduation trends at ULDLI since that time.

In comparison with UIDLC, the table also shows that there has been fluctuations in graduation over the years covered too, (from 1996/97 to 2005/2006 academic sessions) and this also is without a defined steady pattern. This continued till 2004/2005 academic session when there was an upsurge of graduating distance learning Education graduates of 819 and it is interesting to know that UIDLC education graduates have been on the increase since then. However, before 2004/2005 session, the pattern of graduation was almost the same in the two distance learning universities as the number kept fluctuating for eight years respectively even though at a very low rate for ULDLI (from 1996/97 to 2004/05) academic sessions and minimal in the case of UIDLC (which was experienced from 1999/2000 to 2005/2006 sessions).

In comparing the classes of degree attained, none of the two distance learning institutions was able to produce a first class Education graduate between 1996/97 and 2005/2006

academic sessions. However, while UIDLC produced 792 second class upper division distance learning Education graduates within this period, ULDLI was only able to produce 27 second class upper division distance learning Education graduates. For second class lower division, UIDLC presented 2,470 Education distance learning graduates while ULDLI presented 318 Education distance learning graduates. To this end, it is evident that UIDLC had more distance learning graduates obtaining good/quality degrees than her ULDLI counterparts. In contrast, ULDLI had been able to present 394 graduating distance learning Education graduates for third class (3<sup>rd</sup> class) degree and 56 distance learning Education graduates as those with pass degree respectively between 1996/97 and 2005/2006 sessions. On the other hand UIDLC was able to produce 60 third class (3.0) degree and 96 pass degree within the same academic sessions.

Comparing the graduates' results further, it was discovered that most UIDLC Education graduates qualified for the second class lower (2.1) cadre with a total of 2,470. This is unlike what it entails with ULDLI, which had most of her distance learning Education graduates qualifying with third class (3<sup>rd</sup> class) category with a total of 394 as can be seen from Tables 4.5 and 4.6 above respectively. The two Distance Learning institutions have 93 pass degree holders for UIDLC and 56 in the case of ULDLI.

On the whole, the results of UIDLC can be accepted as very good and better than ULDLI that has majority of her graduates falling into 3<sup>rd</sup> class category. This is a rather fair result on the part of ULDLI which does not indicate any qualitative Education in their programme. The implication of this is that ULDLI does not survey students about their learning experiences and does not provide necessary support for her education students in order to improve on their studies.

The results of findings from this research question agrees with Idowu in Ogunsola (2004), Yoloye in Ogunsola (2004), Osasona (2006), Aworh (2005), Ekhaguare (2005) and Egbokhare (2005), who all posit that quality should be assessed among other things in measuring the students' performance and one of the yardsticks in measuring students' performance is availability of learning materials relevant to the instruction. It also corroborated Obanya's (2005) view of quality in education as a multi-dimensional concept built into and nurtured in the course of all the phases and all facets of educational development endeavours, in order to ensure that they yield the right type of fruits in a sustainable manner.

The result further corroborated Ekhaguare (2005) who further suggests that quality should be characterized among other things by fitness of purpose, fitness for purpose, value for money perfection which is perceived as the attainment of near flawless product and excellence, which is viewed as the attainment of exceptionally high standards. Osasona (2006), corroborating Ekhaguare outlines five major approaches to quality as exceptionality, consistency, fitness of purpose, value for money and transformation.

### **Conclusion**

It is apparent that the two distance learning institutions are striving to meet the stated objectives of their respective programmes, it would be necessary to remind these two Universities operating distance learning programmes that they both have international recognition to maintain, hence, they both must aim at international coverage respectively.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this comparative study pose a number of implications for the two distance learning institutions, and the following recommendations are hereby made in order to improve on the academic performance of distance learning education graduates and the quality of their productivity.

- ♦ The capacity of resource centres (Information and Communication Technologies [ICTs]) needs to be increased by the distance learning institutions respectively, in order to accommodate more learners at a time to utilize these facilities.
- ♦ The two distance learning institutions should take steps to use the internet for dispensing course materials to students and also exchange communication between distance learning students and their course lecturers on one hand, and among the students on the other hand.
- ♦ The two institutions should commence the process of the implementation of the assessment of their lecturers by distance learning students which should be opened and in consonance with the current trends globally.
- ♦ The two distance learning institutions should employ the services of experts in open and distance learning rather than reliance on conventional teachers. They therefore require significant trainings for capacity building in order to keep up with the rapid change in emerging technologies
- ♦ Human resource development centre should be established to aid the development of strong and holistic human resources.

Since the mother institutions of the two distance learning programmes belong to the Federal Government of Nigeria, it is pertinent to recommend that the Government should make available, if possible as a matter of urgency, adequate funds for the promotion of distance learning programmes not only to these two institutions, but to all at large, so that the programme can meet up with international standards and give room for global competitiveness. Government should attach importance to the supply of electricity supply for efficient and reliable delivery of course materials, the use of ICT and internet services to their distance learners.

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