Chapter 13
Empowering the Culture of Quality Research within Ethical Standards in Distance Education

J.O. Osiki
National University of Lesotho, Lesotho

ABSTRACT
Fundamental in today’s Distance Higher education (DHE) in the African sub-regions, is how to continue to harness the dividends inherent in the multi-dimensionality of empowerment, for inducing a virile tradition of research, through the shared-benefits of academic/intellectual symbiosis. In such atmosphere, the mentor is less egoistic and willing to provide leadership as a motivator for a value-driven research orientation of the committed protégés. Using the cyclical model, while the novelty of early academic irritants are to be acknowledged, learners’ emotionality is identified as raw material for boosting both qualitative and quantitative research skills, within clearly defined workplaces’ standards. The acquisition of relevant skills and its benefits is therefore sinequanon for nurturing and sustaining research culture especially in DHE.

INTRODUCTION
Creating and sustaining a credible research culture and or behaviour, especially in Open Distance Learning (ODL) is a regular discussion in Higher Education (HE). Such discussions are conjecturally maintained, due to the peculiar circumstance of the teaching-learning instructional environment that highly minimises the potential for physical contact. Additionally, while the notion doubting the academic competence and or professional behaviour of the recipients of the ODL is presently on the wane, adequate arrangements to boost and sustain high premium in terms of its scholarship are however, on-going. Specifically therefore, the broad spectrum of this chapter is to investigate (a) how to stimulate novelty in academic irritants and a virile research tradition in ODL; (b) emotionality versus empowerment of research tradition; (c) empowering the culture of research within ethical standards; (d) mentorship, empowerment and research tradition in ODL; (e) modelling for qualitative and quantitative

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research in open distance programme (ODP); (f) operationalisation of feedback in empowerment; and (g) the cyclical model in research empowerment.

BACKGROUND

A vital part of academic activity and or credibility is the regular validation of the expected outcome of meaningful teacher-learner interaction in, especially Higher Education (HE). Amidst the expectations, is harnessing the best method for initiating the tradition (otherwise, culture) of research behaviour in especially the Open Distance Learning (ODL). Another of such outcome arguably reflects on the learners’ potentials in their abilities to choose and decide feasible research topic(s) which, they are expected to pursue to its logical end. Important in the dimension, is also the notion that the research outcome must for instance, have value, for the immediate community and or society’s (otherwise, national) avowed determination for survival, growth and continued relevance among, especially the committee of nations. For research to be of immense benefits, particularly to the global community, its outcome must possess an in-built mechanism for authenticating its dividends. Authenticating the impact of such research should therefore evolve from the background of its ability to be specific, measurable and with the potential for a long-lasting effect for the entire community socio-economic advancement. Developing research skills and its utility in learners, especially in distance higher education DHE, is a significant by-product of functional teacher-learner interaction, intentionally and holistically instigated through multi-purposed and positively oriented empowerment strategies for the stimulation and nurturing of functional research culture among academics.

Fundamental in the various empowerment skills (otherwise, re-tooling prowess) that HE and or DHE ensures, is the opportunity for the acquisition of multiple developmental academic skills, some of which include, learners’ ability to know and select appropriate and feasible research topics and designs with a concomitant statistical methods for data quantification. Preparing and empowering learners in research skills, especially from the backdrop of the Open Distance Programme (ODP), is not only important for human development and behaviour change, but, an urgent demand to induce the public confidence in the academic (with particular emphasis on research) and the professional behaviour of learners. Boosting the public confidence vis-à-vis the ODP, through adequate research ventures, testable and or verifiable research outcomes as well as research dividends, is not merely timely and necessary, but, it is an indubitable requirement for professional acceptability, credibility and the sense of belongingness. One important dimension for positive imaging of the ODP in Africa therefore, and in particular, the DHE cum its beneficiaries, is the initiation and a dogged pursuit of a sound academic tutelage for a culture of research empowerment. Such facility for empowerment and or re-tooling in research is supposedly nurtured at the baccalaureate programmes in ODP which graduate studies, unequivocally and expectedly should advance through appropriate machineries within ethical standards.

Empowering learners and especially, the recipients of Open Distance learning (ODL) in Africa, is however, a regular challenge at least, in both HE and or DHE (Braimoh and Osiki, 2008). Though the concept ‘HE’ has multiple definitions, depending on how the sub-regions and or countries have conceptualize its scope, the challenges in the ODL however, are rather peculiar especially when compared to those within the conventional programmes. Astronomically for instance, while the enrolment in the ODL is becoming very frightening, especially within the African sub-regional paradigm (otherwise, world-wide), learners within the conventional programmes are easily available for academic tutelages, by the mere