


# Chapter 3


## Realising Education Rights Through ODEL via Policy Analysis of Past Trends and Future Pathways

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### ABSTRACT

*Access to education has traditionally been tied to formal institutions; however, evolving educational models now emphasise inclusivity, lifelong learning, and the removal of barriers. Open and Distance E-Learning (ODEL) has emerged as a transformative force, offering quality education, diverse course options, and teaching standards comparable to conventional universities. While ODEL has flourished in advanced economies as a viable alternative to physical classrooms, its adoption in Nigeria remains limited due to developmental challenges. These issues call for a strategic policy shift and a comprehensive review of implementation barriers. Embracing a*

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*human rights-based approach, alongside national and international initiatives, can help unlock ODEL's full potential. Emerging technologies also play a vital role in expanding access and aligning with global educational objectives. To truly harness ODEL's promise, Nigeria must chart forward-looking policies that prioritise equity, innovation, and sustainable development in its educational landscape.*

## **1. 0 INTRODUCTION**

Education has been recognized as a fundamental human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This global acknowledgment prompted many governments to enshrine education as a constitutional right, often accompanied by subsidized educational programs. Yet, the practical implementation of these policies remains inconsistent. In Nigeria, for example, the government frequently offers rhetorical support for education, while well-crafted policies often remain unexecuted. This disconnect has hindered the nation's ability to fully realize the benefits of a robust and qualitative education system. The UNICEF (2007) identifies three core components of the right to education: the provision of learning opportunities from early childhood through adulthood, the availability of sufficient and accessible educational resources, and the assurance of equal opportunity for all. Unfortunately, these ideals are increasingly elusive in Nigeria. Structural challenges such as inadequate school capacity, poor infrastructure, a shortage of qualified educators, and pervasive poverty have rendered free education inaccessible to many—particularly marginalized populations. Quality education is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive and equitable lifelong learning. Again, the UNESCO (2017) underscores that Education 2030 must be grounded in human rights, positioning education as central to sustainable development. Consequently, access to both qualitative and quantitative education must transcend geographic and socioeconomic barriers.

Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) presents a viable pathway to address these systemic challenges. Designed to facilitate unrestricted access to education, ODeL promotes equity by dismantling traditional barriers to learning. It embodies a comprehensive interpretation of the right to education—one that includes not only institutional access but also the eradication of discrimination, the establishment of minimum standards, and the enhancement of quality across all levels. Through technology, ODeL enables learners to study from any location, regardless of gender, physical ability, or economic status. This model is particularly transformative for mature learners previously excluded due to cultural or traditional constraints. The growing demand for both formal and informal education, coupled with limited physical infrastructure, renders the adoption of ODeL both necessary and urgent. It

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