Leaders in Distance Education on the African Continent

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Introduction

Recognising and documenting leadership in distance education on the African continent is a daunting task, fraught with a number of difficulties, such as deciding on which criteria to consider and *who* to include. And are these criteria truly global or are there issues relating to those used to select individuals on the *African* continent? Other challenges include, but are not limited to, the following questions: How do we evaluate and define *leadership* in distance education on the African continent? Are we looking for individuals who have contributed to the advancement of distance education *as praxis* on the African continent, regardless of their international gravitas, or are we looking for African scholars who shaped our understanding of distance education as a specific *research and theoretical* field in the context of Africa? We also need to consider what sources we will use to identify leaders in distance education on the African continent. Will we only use published literature and scholarship in the field of distance education, such as books, reports and articles in scholarly journals? In addition, how do we engage with the realities that reports of exemplary leadership in distance education may not be digitally available, or available in English? What are the implications if we find, as I will point out later, that there is very little recognition of African leadership in distance education, with the exception of a few individuals and institutions, *outside* of Africa?

Having recognised some of the questions pertaining to recognising leadership in distance education on the African continent, I do not claim that the task was unique in its difficulty or more difficult than, for example, documenting leadership in distance education in other geopolitical contexts. Each of the contributors to this initiative to recognise and celebrate leadership in distance education leadership in the *Journal of Learning for Development* may have interpreted this task differently, depending on their own location, context and expertise in the field. Inevitably, a multitude of intersecting, often interdependent and mutually constitutive personal, disciplinary, institutional and geopolitical factors shaped my own approach to this task.

A Short Background to Distance Education on the African Continent

The African continent comprises 54 sovereign states, each with its own educational regulatory framework and development agenda. Despite these differences, most African states share in the intergenerational legacy of colonisation and the historical and continued marginalisation in international economic, social, and scholarly networks. In documenting leadership in distance education on the African continent, we therefore cannot ignore the historical and persistent effects of

the global asymmetries of knowledge production and dissemination (e.g., Epstein, Boden, Deem, Rizvi, & Wright, 2008; Hoppers, 2000; Stack, 2016).

There is, up to the present, as far as I could establish, no comprehensive account of the history and evolution of distance education on the African continent. While distance education as a particular form of educational provision has a long and rich history on the African continent (Perraton, 1992), a scholarly recognition of the variety, richness, and evolution of distance education on the African continent is often disregarded or absent in publications on the evolution of international distance education. In contrast to the scant evidence of the evolution of distance education on the African continent (see, for example, Cleveland-Innes and Garrison, 2010; Holmberg, 1995; Holmberg, Bernath, and Busch, 2005; Keegan, 1996; Moore and Kearsley, 2011; Peters, 2002; World Bank, 1988), African scholars, such as Aderinoye, Siaciwena, and Wright (2009), Adekanmbi, (2004), Ajadi, Salawu and Adeoye (2008), Botha (2011), Jenkins (1989), Kinyanjui (1998), Mays (2005), Ojo and Olakulein (2006), Prinsloo (2016a) and Wolff (2002) do provide glimpses of the evolution of distance education on the African continent in specific contexts or relating to specific elements of distance education provision. In an attempt to revisit the different theories on the evolution of distance education, Heydenrych and Prinsloo (2010) provide a provisional critique of these theories by attempting to map the phases in the evolution of distance education and by pointing to a broader perspective, which includes histories of knowledge production in the Global South.

Despite the obvious limitations and challenges faced in any attempt to document the contributions of individuals to the evolution of distance education on the African continent, this article provides brief glimpses of particular individuals who contributed to the expansion of distance education in specific contexts. The list of individuals celebrated in this article is neither complete nor comprehensive but begins a conversation to prompt further research on the evolution of distance education on the African continent, and those individuals and organisations that contributed to the evolution.

Brief Notes on my Research Design and Methodology

Earlier in this article I acknowledged the implicit and explicit factors and challenges in acknowledging and documenting distance education leadership on the African continent. I have no doubt that my own location at the most southern part of the African continent and as a staff member at a distance education institution (UNISA) have an impact on my research, despite/amid my intentions to remain aware of the potential for bias, omission and disregard.

In a desktop study I relied on what is *digitally* available on the Internet in regard to scholarly articles or institutional web sites. I engaged only with sources that were published in English. While I appreciate the input and contributions of other researchers and scholars who sent me extracts and/or contributions, there was often no way that I could verify the source or claims made in the article or news item.

As a starting point, I circulated an email (dated 4 November, 2016b) to a range of scholars and experts in the distance education field in *Southern* Africa to get a sense of potential candidates. In the email I explicitly mentioned "the limitations of my own networks and knowledge about possible candidates, [and] I also think it would be arrogant for me to assume such a responsibility on my own. I would therefore like to invite you to be part of this project" (Prinsloo, 2016b). I also made my own intention

explicit "not to focus on the role of the different principals, vice-chancellors, and/or rectors" of the different distance education institutions because:

> To focus on these people in leadership positions will make the list incredibly long, and may result in a who's who of the top echelon of institutions. The bigger danger is that once you mention one VC or Chancellor, you open Pandora's Box and the others who are not mentioned may feel aggrieved. Though I do acknowledge that the individuals in these positions did play a crucial role in the growth and development of online and distance learning, I would really like to focus those who shifted discourses and practices, who made us, think afresh regarding the potential and challenges in ODeL (Prinsloo, 2016b).

As a follow-up, I also tweeted information regarding the project and asked my Twitter network to share the call for an expression of interest. I also posted the invitation to participate or to 'nominate' individuals on my Facebook page and Linkedin profile pages. I sent emails to a range of African distance education organisations asking for participation in 'nominating' potential candidates. The Google Doc I created where people could post names only had 15 entries after two months, with most of the names being from South Africa and the majority of names from the fields of online (and not particularly distance) education and Open Educational Resources (OER) contexts. Until recently, UNISA was the only dedicated comprehensive distance education institution in South Africa (Prinsloo, 2017); therefore it was not strange that most of the suggested people were from UNISA.

I therefore acknowledge that as a result of the above approach and the relatively low response rates, this article does not claim to provide a comprehensive overview of everyone who played a leadership role in distance education in an African context. Instead, the selection is personal and potentially biased. It is, nevertheless, a transparent attempt to highlight and celebrate the contributions of *some* individuals in the field of distance education. I have no doubt that another researcher may have selected/included other individuals than those below. From my understanding and expertise in the field, I am, however, convinced that there would have been overlaps between the different researchers' lists.

Individual Profiles

The following profiles of individuals are in no particular order. I did however sequence the profiles in such a way as to prevent a clustering of profiles from one particular gender or geopolitical location. The length of each profile bears no significance to the gravitas of the person and is rather a reflection of my chosen research methodology and approach and information forthcoming from those acknowledged at the end of the article.

Jenny Glennie (South African Institute for Distance Education or SAIDE, South Africa)

Jennifer Glennie, usually known as Jenny, is the founding Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), an independent non-profit organization based in South Africa, but working across sub-Saharan Africa. She has committed most of her working life to investigating and promoting distance education, and, more recently, technology and open education resources (OER), to create meaningful educational opportunities for poor and marginalised groups.

Before the formation of SAIDE, in Apartheid South Africa, this campaign was driven against difficult odds and in the face of an extremely hostile government. For fifteen years and in various senior capacities in SACHED (the SA Council for Distance Education), Glennie played a leading role in large

projects emphasising contextually appropriate, activity-based learning materials and a wide range of student support mechanisms (unheard of in South African distance education at the time). These included teacher upgrading projects, a groundbreaking 24-page educational newspaper supplement covering formal and non-formal courses aimed at black adults and out-of-school youth, a university access programme for poorly prepared students, and a programme for the training of labour and community organizers.

Soon after SAIDE's establishment, in 1994, Glennie spearheaded an international review that assessed current distance education provision and painted a vision of the contribution that distance education could make to the transformation of South Africa's education system. Building on this, Glennie played a leading role in shaping what is considered to be quality distance education in South Africa through the development set of guidelines, published by NADEOSA – South Africa's distance education association, of which she was a key mobiliser and the founding President – and SAIDE's Good Practice Guide for Distance Education in a Digital Age, developed for the Council on Higher Education. Through a number of contributions by SAIDE to government, she helped shape and inform South Africa's distance education policy across the post-schooling sector in the direction of an open learning perspective. She has consistently placed emphasis on the importance of student success as a complement to the usual emphasis on student access.

She brought this passionate commitment to the governance positions to which she was appointed: South Africa's representative on the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) for two terms, and the Broad Transformation Forum and the Council of UNISA (South Africa's massive distance education university) for over 20 years.

After serving on the organizing committee for the Second Pan-Commonwealth Conference in Durban in 2002 and as joint chair of the organizing committee for the All-African Ministers' Conference in Cape Town in 2004, Glennie became increasingly involved in sub-Saharan Africa through the African Council on Distance Education (which recently officially recognised SAIDE's contribution), and a number of initiatives supporting African universities and teacher training colleges.

The emergence of open educational resources (OER) was an important development for Glennie, with SAIDE embracing the concept at an early stage as further ammunition in its quest to extend access to quality education. Among other initiatives, which SAIDE embarked on, to enhance the development of policy and practice, Glennie co-edited a book of case studies for CoL/UNESCO, and was joint author of a paper in a subsequent collection.

SAIDE's pioneering recent African Storybook Initiative embodies Glennie's commitment: using the concept of OER and a technology platform, it provides children in a score of African countries and 104 languages with contextually and culturally appropriate stories to read, setting them on a path to a life of reading and learning.

The Commonwealth of Learning has conferred on Jenny Glennie the title of honorary fellow for her contribution to distance education, and the University of Pretoria has awarded her the Chancellor's medal for her contribution to education in South Africa.

Dr Bakary Diallo (African Virtual University or AVU, Kenya)

In 2015, the African Virtual University (AVU) was acknowledged by the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) for its role in the expansion of educational opportunities in Africa, through e-learning programmes to 57 countries (https://www.icde.org/prize-winners-in-2015). The prize was awarded in recognition of the fact that the AVU managed this feat despite various challenges, such as the complexities of working with partner universities, limited resources and linguistic and cultural barriers. Receiving the prize on behalf of the AVU was Dr Bakary Diallo. Diallo's influence and impact in the field of distance education have been shaped by his involvement in education since 1989 as a secondary school teacher (in Senegal), a researcher, a project administrator, consultant and academic. In 2007 he was appointed as the CEO and Rector of the AVU. With a consistent focus on the integration of ICTs in higher education institutions, it comes as no surprise that DIallo became involved in the AVU in 2007 (http://www.avu.org/avuweb/en/staff/dr-bakary-diallo/).

Not only did the AVU bring educational opportunities to the doorstep of many who would have been excluded from accessing higher education, it also, under the leadership of Diallo, spearheaded the early adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) on the African continent. In collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the AVU launched a pilot project in 2005 "aimed at increasing the use of OpenCourseWare (OCW) materials in African institutions of higher learning" (Diallo, & Rasugu, 2009, p. 2). In a context of a severe lack of resources faced by many institutions of learning as well as students, "OERs provide a partial solution to this inequality" (Diallo, & Rasugu, 2009, p. 4). A further contributing factor to the scope of the role played by Diallo and the AVU in this regard is the fact that countries in Africa and other developing world contexts, often use learning content derived from developed world contexts and the materials are not always appropriate for the needs and world-views of African learners. The AVU, under the leadership of Diallo, worked across borders and languages in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa to foster "regional integration and mobility for education professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Diallo, & Rasugu, 2009, p. 5).

Professor Nyameko Barney Pityana - South Africa

Prof Pityana has been called "a distinguished ODL expert, a theologian, a lawyer, an activist and custodian of human rights, a delightful and respected intellectual and scholar [who] has in very many ways endeared his unique personality to all who have crossed his path" (Jegede, 2011, p. 1). When the idea of the African Council for Distance Education was mooted in 2002 at a conference of the SCOP (the Standing Committee of Presidents and Vice Chancellors) under the aegis of the ICDE held at UNISA, Pityana was a member of the Executive Committee. While distance education was, by then, well established on the African continent, African distance education institutions had only observer status in the ICDE and were not full members. In his role on the executive of the ACDE and as Vice Chancellor of UNISA, Pityana worked relentlessly to advance distance education, not only on the African continent, but internationally and in developing world contexts. An example of his passion to realise the potential of distance education on the African continent is his belief that distance education can not only widen access and increase participation in higher education but do so in cost-effective ways without sacrificing quality (Pityana, 2009). He, however, warns against "the uncritical acceptance and implementation of ODL as an 'easy way out'" and points to the need that institutions

"must also acknowledge the significant and serious challenges which have to be overcome in its implementation, including financial resources and intellectual capital" (p. 8).   To realise the potential of distance education we "will have to look afresh at collaborations and partnerships, preferably through a strategic lens that discourages fragmentation and piecemeal efforts and that encourages consolidation, cooperation and mutual benefit" (p. 18).

Throughout his career Pityana advanced the aims and mandate of distance education at various international fora such as the Pan Commonwealth Forum, the United Nations, UNESCO, and the Commonwealth of Learning, always emphasising distance education's unique potential not only to provide access to educational opportunities but also to contribute to broader humanity.

Jegede (2011) quotes Sir John Daniel who said of UNISA under the leadership of Pityana, "'No university in the world has faced a more challenging trajectory than UNISA in the last two decades" which included "the daunting task of transforming the philosophy, pedagogy, structures and people of a massive institution while continuing to teach students effectively" (p. 2). Pityana has "consistently directed attention to the practice and use of ODL for global benefits and the need for a continuous review of the theories which scaffold this area of human endeavour" (Jegede, 2011, p. 3).

Professor Olugbemiro Jegede (Nigeria)

One cannot speak about the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), the largest tertiary institution in Nigeria, without reference to the impact of the scholarship and leadership of Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, the founding vice-chancellor of NOUN.

In 2001 Jegede was invited by the Federal Government of Nigeria to promote distance learning in Nigeria. He assumed the position as the National Coordinator of the National Open and Distance Learning Programmes in 2001 and in 2003 he was appointed as the founding and current Vice-Chancellor of NOUN.

Jegede has had vast experience in different distance education contexts and roles such as at Curtin University of Technology's Science and Mathematics Education Centre (Perth, Australia); as founding director for the Centre for Research in Distance & Adult Learning, the Open University of Hong Kong; the Foundation Head for the Research & Evaluation Unit Distance Education Centre at the University of Southern Queensland (Toowoomba, Australia) and the Foundation Dean and Professor of Education, Department of Education, Faculty of Education, the University of Abuja, Nigeria.

In addition to contributing to the development of distance education on the African continent, Jegede also has an extensive publication record in various internationally refereed journals in distance education. He is furthermore a long-standing member of the ICDE and served as Chairman of its task force on research in 1995. He is also a member of the Executive Board of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) (http://www.olugbemirojegede.com/page_about_more.html).

Jegede is one of the most cited African scholars in distance education. His co-authored articles with Aikenhead titled "Cross-cultural science education: A cognitive explanation of a cultural phenomenon" (Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999) and "Transcending cultural borders: Implications for science teaching" (Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999) have, in particular, been widely cited. Of interest in regard to Jegede's research is the fact that his research is embedded in his own disciplinary background in the sciences - he is a chartered biologist of the United Kingdom Institute of Biology.

His research not only speaks to a deep concern for African learners but also critically reflects on the challenges of (science) education. For example, in 1992 he co-authored an article "Adopting technology in third world classrooms: students' viewpoint about computers in science teaching and learning" (Jegede & Okebukola, 1992). Specific to research in distance education, he co-published "Gender differences in factors influencing achievement of distance education students" (Taplin & Jegede, 2001), and "From convocation to flexible learning: The role of ODL in community development" (Jegede, 2009). His research is, however, not limited to the African continent as he has also published "Distance education research priorities for Australia: A study of the opinions of distance educators and practitioners" (Jegede, 1994).

His contribution to the field of distance education was acknowledged by the ICDE in 2015.

Catherine Ngugi, Open Educational Resources, Kenya

In mapping and recognising leadership in distance education, it is interesting to see how different individuals link across the continent and across initiatives and themes. Catherine Ngugi is a prime example. Not only is she the Project Director of OER Africa, a SAIDE initiative (of which Jenny Glennie is the CEO) based in Kenya, she also established the AVU's Research & Innovation Facility (RIF) in January 2005 and managed it until September 2007. She began her career in the private sector in Kenya and has since worked for the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and the Oxfam GB West Africa Regional Office before joining SAIDE. She is, furthermore, a Rockefeller Associate of the African Gender Institute (University of Cape Town), and has authored a number of publications (http://gedc2013.engineering.nd.edu/bio-pdfs/ngugi.pdf)

In a seminal article, Ngugi (2011) mapped the role of open educational resources (OER) in the development and future of higher education on the African continent against the backdrop of "historical phases of colonialism, post-colonialism, and current ongoing national and regional agendas" (p. 277) and the "geographical breadth and cultural and linguistic complexity" (p. 278). Ngugi (2011) explores, *inter alia*, the role of funding, lack of infrastructure, role and competencies of faculty, as generative mechanisms in addressing the intergenerational legacies of colonialism and, in the case of South Africa, apartheid. While OER do offer huge potential for education on the African continent, Ngugi (2011) warns that "it is naive to assume that all OER created outside Africa is equally relevant in Africa" (p. 284) and that Africa has to become producers instead of only consumers of content generated outside of the continent. OER is therefore "not a panacea, but one incremental step to bridge the yawning gap in access, equity, and quality that prevails in much of African education" (p. 286).

In a recent article, Ngugi and Butcher (2016) provide a very sobering view on the role of OER Africa in supporting the development and use of OER in three African countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa. They report that there has been "a significant increase in interest in establishing clear IP policies to manage the complex range of issues associated with copyright management that have been introduced by the growth of open licences" but that there is "a misalignment between OER practices and institutional priorities and HR policies" resulting in faculty being unclear with regard to how they will be "rewarded and recognised for their engagement in materials development processes" (p. 9). Ngugi and Butcher (2016) conclude that "only when universities place as much value on teaching and learning as they do on academic research will we begin to see research into the

relative effectiveness of different educational methods become an institutional priority and incentives for academics or support staff to conduct such research concomitantly strengthened" (p. 10).

Prof Mandla Makhanya – South Africa

Prof Mandla Makhanya is the current Executive Committee President of the ICDE, Vice Chancellor of UNISA and the treasurer of the ACDE.   What makes Makhanya's career trajectory so remarkable is the fact that he rose through the ranks after starting as a junior lecturer in the Sociology Department at UNISA. He then became the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and later the Executive Dean of the College of Human Sciences and Pro Vice Chancellor of UNISA. He holds a BA and a BA (Hons) (in Sociology), a Diploma in Tertiary Education, a Master's Degree in Industrial Sociology and a DPhil. The University of Athabasca in Canada conferred upon him a PhD (*Honoris Causa*) in 2007 in recognition of his exemplary leadership at UNISA and his contribution as a distinguished scholar in distance education. He has published widely and his expertise in distance education is respected and acknowledged far beyond the borders of South Africa and the African continent (http://www.acdeafrica.org/prof-mandla-makhanya).

A *leitmotif* in Makhanya's scholarship on open distance learning is his commitment to realise the potential of distance education in contributing to the needs of human development on the African continent. In order to realise this potential, ODL institutions need to "think broadly, to partner wisely and to advance courageously" (McKay & Makhanya, 2008, p. 47). Makhanya (in Jegede, 2011) refers to open and distance learning "as the 'Cinderella' of higher education delivery, hemmed in on all sides by discriminatory policies, practices and perceptions, and ODL providers are faced with difficult challenges that need to be overcome if its full potential and promise are to be realised" (p. 2). Reflecting on the theme of the 26th International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) World Conference, Makhanya (2016) states that "In continuing and realising the potential of distance education provision and, increasingly, distance e-learning, we have to seriously consider some of the core assumptions and questions that have informed distance education provision up to now… [and] consider how issues such as quality, access and cost are impacted upon by changing funding regimes, the massification of education, an increasing number of institutions offering e-learning, changing student profiles and advances in educational technology" (pp. 237-238). He continues to state that there is "no silver bullet or easy solutions" in "growing capacity [in open and distance education] in comprehensive, systemic and holistic ways" (p. 238).

Delvaline Möwes (Namibia University of Science and Technology or NUST, Namibia)

Delvaline Möwes, like many other distance education practitioners (see Jegede above), holds a variety of academic qualifications and has a range of disciplinary interests. She holds a PhD in Education specialisation in student support in Open Distance Learning (ODL), a MEd (*Cum Laude*) in Educational Psychology and BEd Honours from the University of Namibia; a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Johannesburg (majoring in Computer Science & Mathematics) and a Post Graduate Higher Education Diploma. She is currently Director: Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning (COLL) at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and has held this position since 2002. She began her career in ODL in 1992 at the University of Namibia's (UNAM) Centre for External Studies.

Möwes has had a rich experience in distance education and has presented her research at a range of scholarly conferences, keynotes, workshops and seminars in Portugal, Malaysia, New Zealand, Germany, Cambridge, India, Seychelles, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Botswana. At present she is the Chair & Vice-Chair of the Namibian Open Learning Network (NOLNet) Board of Trustees; Chairperson of the NOLNet Management Committee; member of the Namibian National Core Team for ODL Policy Development; and member of a range of NUST committees and task teams. She is also an ODL Subject Matter Expert for the Namibian Qualifications Authority (NQA) Audit Team for Institutional and Programme Accreditation for both Public and Private ODL Providers; Country Representative and Executive Member of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA); Country Representative and Chairperson of the SADC-Technical Committee on ODL (SADC-TCODL); Executive Member of the Forum of African Women Educationalists in Namibia (FAWENA); and a Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Consultant in Zambia and Nigeria. She serves on several editorial boards as reviewer, and acts as external examiner and graduate supervisor.

Throughout her career in teaching, research, and consultancy, she has had extensive exposure and a proven capacity to lead in a stimulating and culturally diverse environment, including a strong background of 25 years hands-on experience at both middle and senior level management in higher education and ODL. In this, she has added value to the strengthening of technology-enhanced learning and the ODL profile in Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Nigeria and Portugal.

In her role as Director she is accountable for an annual budget of ±N$51 million and received the COL Award for Institutional Excellence in Distance Education in 2010, Kerala, India. This Award was in recognition of the significant achievements in the innovative and effective application of appropriate learning technologies, demonstrating the Centre's long-term and on-going success in making learning opportunities more accessible to students who might otherwise not have participated in the learning experience. Möwes also received the Education Leadership Award in 2014 at the Global Distance Learning Congress, Mumbai-India, endorsed by *Thought Leaders*, for her leadership of and contribution to the field of education, and for being a role model and believer in cutting edge change. Her most recent accolade was in November 2016 when she was tasked by the NOLNet Board to present Namibia's National ODL Policy to Cabinet and received the confirmation soon after that Cabinet had approved the Policy.

Ambassador Nicholas Kuhanga - Tanzania

Ambassador Kuhanga was the Principal Academic Tutor of the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and a Lecturer in Adult Education, Department of Education (presently School of Education), University of Dar es Salaam, in the early 1970s. As the Minister of National Education (1977 – 1979) he conceived and presided over the distance teacher training of a primary school teachers' project, whose major objective was to satisfy the need of the required number of teachers for Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 1977. A total of 35,000 primary school leavers were successfully trained as Grade C Teachers between 1974 and 1977. It would have taken 15 years to train the same number of teachers conventionally. As a serving VC of the University of Dar es Salaam (1979 – 1988) Kuhanga undertook a study visit at the Open University (UK) in 1979 in order to learn how its experiences could benefit Tanzania in the area of dissemination of tertiary education. Unfortunately, however, the University Senate turned down his recommendation for the establishment of an External Studies Department at

UDSM. According to him, "the University was not ready to offer cheap correspondence degrees". Ironically, it was during this time (1979) that the University of Nairobi set up its External Studies Department, and, more ironically, the initial cohort of OUT students (1994 - 1999), relied entirely on study materials from the External Studies Department, University of Nairobi, to study and complete successfully their programmes, particularly, BA, BA (Ed), BSc, BSc (Ed), BCom and BCom (Ed).

Between 1988 and 1990 Kuhanga led the Committee set up by the Minister of Education, the late Amrani Mayagilla (1985 – 1991), to collect views on the need, feasibility and resource requirements for establishing an Open University in Tanzania. The study culminated in the famous Kuhanga Report of 1990, the foundation on which the *OUT Act* of 1992 and hence OUT itself are erected. While Kuhanga stepped down as the VC of UDSM in order to head the Committee, he continued to retain his position as the Chair of the Council of the Institute of Adult Education (IAE). For this reason, on the occasion of the 1st UNESCO International Seminar on Distance Education held in Arusha, 24th – 28th September 1990, Kuhanga was unanimously elected as the Seminar Chair.

Prior to the appointment of the retired President of the 4th Phase Government, HE Dr Jakaya M. Kikwete, as the Chancellor of the UDSM in November 2015, Kuhanga served as the Acting Chancellor of the UDSM. Presently, Kuhanga is, among other responsibilities, the Chair of the Council of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and a founding member of the Distance Education Association of Tanzania (DEATA).

Thandi Ngengebule – South Africa

Thandi Ngengebule initially qualified in the field of Social Work but embarked on a teaching career in Swaziland, where she qualified as a teacher and taught at a High School for 17 years. In 1985 she joined the SACHED (South African Committee for Higher Education) Trust, an NGO which specialized in the development and delivery of distance educational solutions for disadvantaged black learners in apartheid South Africa, and in 1987 she joined the SACHED management team as one of the Assistant Directors. In this capacity her role expanded to the management and oversight of a diversity of distance education programmes, including a support programme for teacher upgrading (TUP) and the Distance Education University Students Support Project (DUSSPRO) dedicated to supporting tertiary learners studying through UNISA. She was also involved in the development of the Adult Secondary Education Curriculum (ASECA) as alternative capacity development for adult learners at the basic education level. From 1990 onwards she also facilitated the relocation and administration of the (SAEU) the South African Extension Upgrading programme from Tanzania for further delivery of its distance education programmes and support of South African refugees in the post-independence environment. As one of the critical activist organisations standing against apartheid education, SACHED also participated in a variety of initiatives lobbying the national education system to recognize the importance of education beyond the schooling system generally and more specifically the role of learner support in the transformation of distance education delivery.

Against this background, Ngengebule's organisational expertise was further validated when the University of South Africa (UNISA) employed her in 1994 as Head of the Department of Student Support. Her role was to assist the university to initiate and integrate learner support processes into UNISA's teaching and learning environment in collaboration with the various teaching and administrative departments. She was also responsible to oversee the development of systems for

setting up the face-to-face tutor system, the recruitment and training of tutors, and overall advocacy for the integration of tutorial support into the UNISA tuition policy. The delivery of tutorial support services expanded from an initial delivery at a regional network of six sites in (1995-2004) to a coordinated delivery in a regional network of 38 sites (2007/2008). In addition, the department facilitated the development and presentation of the first formal tutor development and training workshop in UNISA in May 1995, in collaboration with the UK based International Extension College (IEC) and SACHED's Distance Education Training Unit (DETU).

From 1985, Ngengebule was an active member and SACHED's representative in the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA). Between 1993-1995 Ngengebule became the first woman to take up the position of chairperson of the DEASA executive committee. This committee consisted of five other women — leaders in distance education institutions from Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and SACHED. In that period this committee played a vibrant role in strengthening DEASA's organizational, professional and leadership role and also built strategic partnerships with other regional and international organizations, for example: Commonwealth of Learning (COL), International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), the African Council for Distance Education (AADE) and the South African Extension Unit (SAEU) in Tanzania. Because of her expertise and experience in DEASA, Ngengebule as the then UNISA representative, developed and delivered a concept paper for the launch conference of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) at the Egerton Conference in Kenya, January 2004. The launch conference resulted in the ACDE's founding constitution and the formation of the first executive committee with representation from Mauritius, Rwanda, Sudan, Nigeria and UNISA.

In addition to leading and participating in many ODL staff development training initiatives in the SADC region she also participated in staff development workshops at the Seychelles Distance Education Centre and at the Open University of SUDAN in Khartoum. She has also attended and presented papers in a number of ODL conferences locally, in the SADC region, in the continent and internationally. She has contributed to the development of the BA (ODL), a course developed by UNISA, and has contributed to a number of publications which include the first edition (1998) and second edition (2008) *Learner support: Case studies of DEASA member institutions.*

Evelyn Nonyongo – South Africa

Evelyn Nonyongo's role in and contribution to ODL emanate from her experience of studying for her first degree through correspondence education offered by the University of London and the learner support that she received from a non-governmental organisation called the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) Trust. Without this external learner support (in the form of a bursary for tuition fees, face-to-face support in the form of weekly tutorials and a study centre for quiet study and interaction with other learners and extra-mural activities), she would not have completed her first degree. This experience kindled and nurtured her interest in, and activism on behalf of, integrated learner support that, in her view, should be the responsibility of institutions providing ODL and not external organisations like SACHED. Hence, except for a two-year teaching job in Soweto during the early 1970s, her entire working life to date has centred on various facets of ODL and included contributions to ODL policy development, theory and practice in a practical, experiential and integrated manner.

There is no doubt that through the provision of learner support to London University and later to UNISA students, SACHED made a significant contribution to thousands of students enrolled by these two institutions. However, SACHED had very limited influence on providing input into these institutions' policy and provision; neither was SACHED's contribution to the success of these students recognised. Activism on integrated learner support, therefore, became one of the major thrusts of Nonyongo's work in SACHED's project called the Distance University Students Support Project (DUSSPRO) that serviced UNISA students and which she managed nationally in learning centres located in Cape Town, Durban, Grahamstown, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The DUSSPRO experience highlighted the need for the development of staff in ODL generally, including integrated learner support. In partnership with the United Kingdom International Extension College, a new project to train ODL practitioners was introduced in SACHED after DUSSPRO's demise and provided useful training to communities in the Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces. This training was adopted as the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners by the UNISA Institute for Continuing Education that Nonyongo managed from 1995 to 2007. This certificate was offered in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) and provided valuable training to ODL practitioners in the southern Africa region and other parts of Africa.

Even in her post-retirement years, Nonyongo has continued her interest, knowledge sharing and practitioners' development and training in ODL and in the development of open education resources (OER). Examples are assisting practitioners in Botswana, Zambia and Ghana to develop open education resources for open schooling through the COL/ William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, an OER Project, which included subjects such as Commerce, Mathematics and Physics (Zambia); Geography, and Human and Social Biology (Botswana) and Hotel Front Office Operations and Kitchen Operations.

Nonyongo's interest in the collaborative approach to ODL programme development and provision was also applied in other programmes like the Diploma in Youth Development, and through active participation in ODL professional associations like DEASA and the National Association of Distance Education Association of South Africa (NADEOSA). She was part of the Commonwealth-wide group that developed the Diploma in Youth Development, championing its formal adoption as one of UNISA's offerings and managing its implementation. With regard to professional associations, she was the founding secretary of NADEOSA and in DEASA she had at various times been a member of its Planning Committee, Secretary, Treasurer and Learner Support Committee member. All these positions involved policy development, planning, programme implementation and managing finances. She was part of the first and only all-female executive of the South Africa/Botswana DEASA branch which counted amongst its successes the raising of a substantial sponsorship for DEASA projects from an external donor, and the production of a book of case studies of DEASA institutions' learner support services, which became a handbook to guide learner support practitioners and which was developed collaboratively in DEASA regional workshops.

Conclusions

Both the task of identifying leadership in distance education, as well as leadership *per se*, does not happen in a vacuum. We need to understand the definition of leadership and the processes of

identifying leadership in a particular historical context (Evans and Nation, 1992). It is clear that we cannot and should not document contributions to distance education on the African continent without seriously accounting for how these contributions and the documentation of these contributions were and are shaped by Africa's history, past and present.

This article's attempt to celebrate the contributions of a number of African individuals is taking place at a particular junction in history, and is, despite this article's limitations, a purposeful act, not only to celebrate but also to provide a counter-narrative to some of the uncontested beliefs and claims regarding distance education on the African continent.

Acknowledgements

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