A DECADE OF DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA: the Promise of Open and Distance Learning

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Purpose:

- To pull together key strands of PCF5, identifying and critiquing the key messages;
- To present an African perspective to the theme of the Forum
- To outline possible future perspectives for ODL, and set an Agenda for Africa.
PCF 5 London 2008

OUTLINE

• Introduction

• A Decade of Developments in Africa

• ACDE

• Africa Virtual University
PCF 5 London 2008

• The second Decade for Education in Africa

• Collaborations: A Critique

• Unisa: A case Study

• Conclusion
ODL – AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

• Challenging traditional notions of dedicated spaces for HE provision
• Used by public and private; primary, tertiary and business
• Flexible and adaptable, renders barriers and borders porous, broadens access and is affordable
• The challenge is how we respond to the opportunity that ODL presents us
THE STATUS OF HE IN AFRICA

- Less that 45% participation rate (less that 2% in some developing countries)
- Enrolment in Sub Saharan Africa the lowest at 5%
- South Africa’s participation rate =17%
- Very wide gender disparities remain
- The brain drain, scientific revolution and digital divide
- Fragmented and disparate systems, lack of infrastructure, facilities and HR capacity
- ODL offers a solution
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ODL AFRICA (1)

• All Ministers Conference of Open Learning and Distance Education, Cape Town, February 2004 → the Cape Town Declaration

• Founding conference of the African Council on Distance Education, Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya, 2004

• 1st ACDE Conference held at Unisa, Pretoria, 2005

• 1st Decade for Education proclaimed by the OAU in 1996 (for the period 1997 – 2006)
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ODL AFRICA (2)

• Review of 1st Decade → the Algiers Declaration
  – Little measurable success
  – Development of an Action Plan for the 2nd Decade, with appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanism,

• 2nd Decade of Education for Africa, revised plan 2006
  – A more strategic and practical articulation of the need for collaboration, partnership and sharing of resources. An Africa solution

• 2nd ACDE Conference and General Assembly, NOUN, Lagos, Nigeria. 8-11 July 2008
E-LEARNING: THE AFRICAN VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY (AVU): *pros and cons* (1)

- AVU established 1996, a project of the World Bank
- AVU launched February 1997 as a technology-based distance education network to bridge the digital divide in Africa (build Science and Engineering capabilities)
- Delivery model: integrated satellite and Internet technologies, providing quality content from all over the world
E-LEARNING: THE AFRICAN VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY (AVU): *pros and cons* (2)

- Grants of nearly US$200,000 to each of 6 participating countries for equipment to start up 12 projects
- Aim to increase access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa through broad access over multiple sites
- Planned over three phases
E-LEARNING: THE AFRICAN VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY (AVU): pros and cons (3)

• Aim to be a independent self-funding university with all programmes generated by African Universities by 2004

• But – bedevilled by same problems, constraints and challenges as other HE initiatives in Africa
  – Difficulty in acquiring resources
  – Became a technology-and content broker facilitating diploma/degree programmes from outside Africa
By 2002 - no longer plans for an independent university
  – First diploma graduates in 2005 (140 out of 24,000 registered students)

Revised Plan in 2005 to collaborate with existing African HEIs to enhance their ODeL capacities

Aim to transition conferring of degrees and diplomas to African partners and establish learning centres on site at partner institutions, and be expected to generate income and be owned by the partner institutions
THE PROMISE OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

- Facilitates and enhances access to education, by removing two key barriers - lack of funds and location
- It is cost efficient and can achieve economies of scale
- It enhances and promotes quality through the development and provision of learning resources for use by teachers and learners irrespective of their location
- It facilitates and promotes access to life long learning
THE PERILS OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

- Emphasis on increasing enrolments with little regard for the quality of the learning experience, throughput and outputs
- Poor quality programmes unrelated to Skills and Human Resource needs
- Inappropriate approaches to curriculum design, development and delivery
- The lure of financial gain
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (1)

- Largest dedicated comprehensive ODL HEI in Africa
- In excess of 265,000 students
- 2015 Strategy: an agenda for transformation
- Excellent infrastructure and reach, cutting edge technology, significant regional presence, financially sound, well managed
- Merger: structures bedded down - focus now on its Academic Identity and programmes
- HEQC Audit
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (2)

- 2007 – Establishment of Ethiopia Learning Centre
- Other Continental collaboration initiatives
- Post reconstruction in Southern Sudan: Programme for the development, training and capacity building of the people of the Southern Sudan (intergovernmental and Unisa collaboration). Diplomatic training and courses on civil service and public administration. (more than 500 have attended since 2005)
- NEPAD Human Development Initiative: Unisa involved in the Distance Education and Teacher Training and Development project with DRC, AVU, CoL, NOUN and funding support from the Japanese International Corporation Agency
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (3)

- Keen interest in large scale teacher upskilling and training evidenced by South Africa’s DoE
- Growing role in ODL provision and facilitation on the Continent – some concrete results
- ACDE Stakeholders Workshop hosted by Unisa in February 2008 to promote African collaboration on ODL and Quality
- A sense of optimism. African efforts, driven by Africans, for Africans
THANK YOU