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Chapter 1

POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING:

The case of Mozambique

By Arnaldo Valente Nhavoto

Distance Education Task Force Coordinator

**The Education and Distance Education context**

The experience of Distance Education (DE) in Mozambique is still very limited now as it was during colonial times when the faint activity of DE concerned correspondence courses in technical and professional subjects. Many of the courses were imported from Portugal and benefited a few people from the colonial elite. At independence in 1975, Mozambique had one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world, about 93%. Primary and secondary education was underdeveloped and with few Mozambicans reaching higher education.

The new Mozambican government established education as one of the priority areas for the political and socio-economic development of the country. On one year, from 1975 to 1976, the enrolments on primary education were doubled (from 600 thousand to 1.2 millions pupils) and huge literacy campaigns and adult education programs were undertaken. Late on the 70's research, discussions and consultations were done in order to establish the National System of Education, replacing the previous one that was based on the Portuguese colonial system.

Taking into account the achievement gained for example, the lowering of the illiteracy rate (1975 to 1980) from 93% to 70%, the National System of Education raised new concerns on the quality of education. In fact, a report written by Arnaldo Nhavoto, Manuel Rego and Arlindo Siteo (1985:24) clearly indicated that the number of unqualified teachers was close to 85% in 1977 and efforts were deployed to decrease that percentage to 44% in 1984. However the situation of employing untrained teachers was unsatisfactory and by 1983 a pilot project of DE was initiated with the use of radio and primary school teachers were target group. The aim of that program was to promote in-service teacher training in order to improve their skills and capacities to teach. The project had a very short span (2 years) and was discontinued. The main factors for the discontinuation of the project were related to the worsening instability in the country due to war and the lack of resources (mainly, financial).

In the mid 90's, three years after the end of the war, the IAP was created and a new program for in-service training of primary education teachers was introduced. This time a decision was taken to use printed materials. The target of the program that

started in 1997 was to train about 15,000 under-qualified teachers who were working in primary schools located in the most rural areas of the countryside. More than 5,000 teachers have been trained, so far, through the program and it is currently under an evaluation process. The broad feeling is that the program has been fulfilling the Ministry and teachers' expectations. Most of the trained teachers got promotions in their professional careers and, as a consequence, their salaries were increased and they achieved an academic level equivalent to junior secondary education. In April 2004, as a follow-up, IAP launched another program that aims to provide in-service training for primary education teachers, in order to allow them to acquire an academic level of upper secondary education.

Late in the 90's other dispersed initiatives were launched on secondary English and French Language Teaching, in view of providing teachers of those subjects for secondary schools. These schools are growing fast and there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers. The Universidade Pedagógica is implementing these initiatives. The Catholic Church developed a Distance Education program for secondary school, known as ESAM. Youth and adults who lost their opportunities to make their studies in secondary education compose the target group. The existing commercial Mozambican banks created Training Institute for bank staff and developed a Distance Education course delivered to the whole country. This current year, the Ministry of Education launched, on pilot basis in four districts of Nampula province, a new course for out of school youth at the secondary education level.

At the end of the 90's an international consultancy, composed by the Commonwealth of Learning, the International Extension College and the University of Namibia, carried out a study to assess the feasibility of the implementation of DE in different levels and types of training. The terms of reference of that study pointed out, among other items, the following:

- Identify the target groups most likely to be attended to by DE methodology, including the identification of their specific education and training needs;
- Identify the resources needed to establish a future Distance Education system in the country;
- Identify training requirements of potential staff to support the establishment of Distance Education system and its implementation;
- Analyze the potentials of existing information and communication capacity in the country, such as radio, television, Internet, video-conferencing, etc. and make recommendations for the establishment of linkages with other sectors e.g. Agriculture, Health, Labour, Industry, etc.;
- Advise on a future Distance Education system suitable for Mozambique, based on the findings of the study and the current national education policy.

At the end of that feasibility study the main recommendations noted that there was potential for the application of open and distance learning techniques whenever the educational and training needs of target groups are identified or reviewed. There was also a strong recommendation to establish a central coordinating and service agency for a national distance education system called the Instituto Nacional de Educação Aberta e a Distância (INEAD).

With the changes occurred in the government on early 2000, a new consultancy from British Council recommended that the plan to create the INEAD was too ambitious and therefore it was better to create a Department of Distance Education (DED) within the Ministry of Education.

In the year 2000, with the new government from 1999 elections, a new ministry was created that being the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology (MHEST). Due to the fact that most of Higher Education institutions are located in the city of Maputo, the new Minister created a Task Force to reflect and develop a policy and strategy proposal for distance education in Higher education in Mozambique. The Task Force consulted many documentation produced about Distance Education in Mozambique and also organized meetings and seminars with many different stakeholders in order to brainstorm and draft the proposal. The final draft was submitted to the cabinet late in 2001. The decision from the cabinet was that the policy and strategy proposal was limited to higher education, leaving other levels of education and non-formal education without any approach to Distance Education. So, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology were urged to harmonize the policy and strategy proposal in order to cover the national system of education, including non-formal education.

Currently, the Mozambican government defines the universal access to basic education of at least 5 years and the eradication of youth and adult illiteracy as part of its strategy for the eradication of absolute poverty and the improvement of living conditions of the populations. The growing numbers of children and youngsters who finish the 7 years of primary schooling put substantial pressure for the expansion of secondary education. Considering the need for social, economic and cultural development of the country, the government recognizes the need to expand and improve the quality of secondary, vocational and professional training and higher education. Figures from enrolments on 2003 indicated that, although many efforts have deployed, the government is far away to achieve its goals.

The education system in Mozambique has a pyramid shape that is large on the bottom (primary enrolment) and narrow on the top (post secondary enrolment). This is a clear indication that after the civil war in 1992, primary education has experienced a very fast growth, while other levels enjoyed a very modest increase in their enrolments. As a consequence, the demand and pressures are very high for education at the secondary and tertiary levels.

### **The education challenges that policy was designated to address**

The policy and strategy document on distance Education in Mozambique was subjected to a wide process of consultation and debate amidst numerous stakeholders. During the exercise of policy formulation the Distance Education Task Force identified many different stakeholders. These stakeholders have been grouped into five categories as follows:

- Public and private institutions responsible for education provision
- Users of public and private providing institutions
- Providers of services
- Funding agencies
- Professionals on DE

The design of the policy document for ODL in Mozambique has been done in a very participatory mode and almost all stakeholders were involved. The Distance Education Task Force organised many different meetings and conducted seminars in the different regions of the country.

### **Why did the government adopt policy to use Distance Education?**

The design of DE policy was derived from the need for education provision in many different areas of the education system and this could not be satisfied using conventional delivery methods. The implementation and development of DE is also being favoured by achievements in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Mozambique.

In its document on the policy and strategy for implementation of DE, the government has defined a series of master principles, the forms for the management of DE and the priority pilot projects for the starting phases. A commission made up of academicians and other education professionals prepared the draft DE policy and strategy document. The document was subjected to a wide process of consultation and debate amidst numerous stakeholders (relevant ministries, educational institutions including universities, businesses linked to postal services, telecommunications, radio and television).

The formulation of the policy was done in a very wide participatory manner. First of all, the Task Force gathered all existing documentation (reports, studies, etc.) about development of distance education in Mozambique. Then, many different meetings and seminars were held with the various stakeholders from all over the country. After consultations with the stakeholders the policy was submitted to Cabinet for approval. The Mozambican government admitted that the implementation of DE in the country would require hefty investments in the training of DE professionals and in the establishment of the necessary infrastructures. The government has been working towards the co-ordination of DE initiatives from public and private providers and has established the following principles:

- The State will play a fundamental role in the definition of policies and strategies for the implementation and development of DE; the State will also be responsible for creating an enabling environment for the participation of public and private educational institutions;
- Distance education must benefit from the same legal relevance as does face-to-face education;
- Distance education programs must cover the whole country in order to ensure regional, social and gender equity;

Initiatives from the distinct public and private institutions committed to implement DE programs must be coordinated in order to rationalize resources in the training of DE professionals, in the set-up of infrastructures and in related DE activities such as student support and production and delivery of instructional materials; the broad goal is to discourage dispersion and duplication of efforts and resources.

Distance education programs run by different public and private providers must be integrated and articulated in order to facilitate the mobility of students and instructors.

This, together with a national network of resource centres must be used and shared by all providers of DE programs;

### **Implementation of policy**

After approval of the policy and strategy document on Distance Education in Mozambique, the Task Force was given the mandate to design a project on Distance Education in order to facilitate the process of implementation of that policy and strategy. The project conceived was composed of the following sub-projects:

- Training of specialists in distance education;
- Establishment of the National Institute of Distance Education;
- Establishment of a national network of resource centres;
- Development of pilot programs of distance learning.
- Establishment of the department of distance education (DED) at MINED;

In order to implement the above-mentioned sub-projects, the Task Force was converted into an Installation Commission of the National Institute of Distance Education (CIINED). The CIINED reports to the Ministers of Education and of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

The mandate of the CIINED is to create all the necessary conditions for the implementation and incremental development of the Distance Education System in Mozambique. The main activities to accomplish the objective of its mandate aim at to:

Create, through training, a team of professionals in Distance Education with sufficient competencies to guarantee the implementation and incremental development of this modality of learning, at INED, Resource Centres and providing institutions (like, universities, higher education institutions, institutes and schools, both public and private).

Develop the infrastructures and the necessary organizational and material means for running the National Distance Education Institute (INED).

Establish a National Network of Resource Centres at national level, which ensures the conditions, in terms of infrastructure, communications and technologies for implementing this type of teaching.

Hold a series of pilot courses, through Distance Education, at national level.

As mentioned earlier, one of the objectives and core mandates of CIINED is to build, through adequate training, a team of DE professionals with sufficient competencies to guarantee the implementation and the incremental development of this learning modality at INED, Resource Centres and providing institutions (such as universities, other higher education institutions, institutes and schools, both public and private). In order to implement a training program, the CIINED draw the terms of reference that through an international competitive bidding led to the selection of a training consortium composed by The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE).

Related to the above, the Hon. Minister of Education and the Hon. Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, in association with other ministers, conducted a half-day seminar for Vice-chancellors and high level officers of institutions that had participants in the training program. The aim of the seminar was to increase the awareness of these high-level policy makers and managers about the importance of ODL approaches for improving access and quality to different levels of education, both formal and non-formal.

A second short seminar was conducted for medium level managers from the same institutions. The aim was to sensitize them about the potential of ODL activities in expanding access and in improving the quality of education provision. The expected outcome was to have these managers starting to plan concrete DE actions to be undertaken by their institutions.

INED developed the following vision - Contribute for the creation of conditions for the improvement of human development and for the full (economic, social and cultural) integration of Mozambique in the global world. It will further promote and encourage the use of ODL methods in different areas and levels of education and training, both formal and non-formal. INED will set up, develop and maintain the network of national infrastructures for full operation of Open and Distance learning system in Mozambique. INED will also create synergies with the course providing institutions, in order to ensure the better allocation and use of the scarce resources and avoid duplication. INED also recognized the need for gathering and sharing data and information and is establishing an information management system.

INED also identified a number of pilot programmes. These included:

- Teachers' training for secondary education level;
- Training programs of grades 8 and 10, now under implementation by MINED with support from COL in the Nampula province; and
- Grade 11 and 12, for young and adults;
- Bridging or preparatory courses for entry into higher education institutions.

The rationale and justification of these pilot programs are related to Government priorities and its efforts to fight illiteracy (around 60%), and absolute poverty affecting around two thirds of the Mozambican population.

The fast growth in basic education did not correspond to the same growing need in the provision of teachers with required qualifications, and this has brought negative effects over the students training quality. In addition, the growth in number of students has been causing a strong pressure over the need to expand the secondary schools network, which consequently causes problems for the secondary education. This level of education is characterised by a very low efficiency, translated into high rates of repetition and dropout as well as the low quality of the graduates. In general, these factors affect the quality of students applying to enter into higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Education's (MINED) Education Strategic Plan also envisions the exploration of alternative ways of providing education, as a necessary option to expand educational opportunities to all national citizens. In order to attain these

objectives, the MINED is determined to explore distance education modalities. Such commitment may be shown through the training programme for teachers in practice, provided by IAP, as well as the pilot programme for secondary education under implementation in Nampula province.

In this context emerged the creation of the MINED Department of Distance Education, with the role of co-ordinating and monitoring all actions and programmes performed for the sake of distance education.

### **Drivers of policy**

As indicated in previous sections of this study case, the high demand in terms of access to different levels of education and the inability of the government to meet the demand by using the conventional methods led the government to see distance education as a means to expand education provision. The advantage also is that by using distance education methods, the Government is looking into ways of reducing geographical (unequal distribution of educational infra-structures between provinces), social (gender issue) and economic disparities of access and participation in secondary and post-secondary education programs. An additional advantage is that, through distance education methods, the government can provide continuing education to the teachers, personnel from health sector and other civil servants without taking them away from their jobs and families.

The recent development and plans to expand and improve telecommunications in the country is creating an enabling environment for the establishment of distance education programs with the potential use of multimedia technologies.

The studies, consultancies and the experiences gained in the field led the government to be much more confident about the potentialities of using distance education methods in the expansion and improvement of education quality provision.

The political willingness and acceptability of distance education methods from educators and other stakeholders make it possible to embark on successful distance education programs.

### **Key triggers and stumbling blocks**

Some key factors of success for the Mozambican Distance Education System are related to:

- An enabling political environment, taking into account that there is a political will from the top level in the government. In addition, the government had defined a clear policy and strategy for the development of Distance Education in the country.
- An enabling leadership and participatory approach, in the sense that the policy and strategy for Distance Education in the country was not imposed from top to bottom, but it has been a complex process of interaction and open dialogue with the partners and stakeholders.

- The availability of adequate funding for the pilot programs is a clear indication that the government is not only committed but also makes available the needed resources for the implementation of the policy and strategy of Distance Education in the country.
- The availability of highly motivated and qualified professionals will create a key factor of successful implementation of the policy and strategy of Distance Education in Mozambique.
- Good quality of Distance Education programs provision will be another key factor of successful implementation because, if achieved, it will demonstrate that distance education methods can provide courses and programs of good quality and, in some cases, it can provide better quality than in face to face programs.

Some constraining factors are as follow:

- Resistance to change from some stakeholders, in particular among academic staff and managers of education who have long experience in working in the face to face mode and never have been exposed to Distance Education methods. It would not be surprising if some of them could perceive distance education as a threat for their jobs.
- Poor institutional collaboration and co-ordination, both horizontally and vertically. The experience of joint collaboration between institutions is very limited. Although the educational sector faces chronic shortages of resources and personnel, sharing has not been a keyword in the current context. This evidence has created significant problems for the institutional understanding of the national DE strategy and for the own work of CIINED, which was expected to initiate dialogue with and between institutions. Dialogue however is slowly being achieved between the trainees, therefore creating optimism toward the prospect of future collaboration between DE professionals of different public and private providers.
- On the other hand, the pressure felt by the potential DE providers to expand access both in numbers and in geographical coverage and the scarcity of resources is helping the role of co-ordination by CIINED which of course being increasingly liable for the success of DE in Mozambique.

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