

## Preface

The editors of the series titled *Does Distance Education in the Developing Context Need More Research? Building Practice into Theory* have had the opportunity to work individually and together in the field of distance education and have had the privilege of occupying offices where decisions that influence practice in the field are made. This series was the result of some serious discussions and reflections around this field.

Although research in distance education is nascent, the field has a long history and much work has been done. Given this rich past, the aim of our work is to raise some pertinent questions which researchers and specialists in the field need to start pondering. For instance:

- After research, what next?
- To what extent do we apply research findings to our practice?
- To what extent does research influence decisions in our field?
- Are there tangible examples of how research has impacted policy and practice?

Due to the importance of the field and the overwhelming interest this project generated among researchers (mostly from sub-Saharan Africa), what was intended to be one book needed to be split into two volumes. Volume 1 pays attention to the history, philosophical and theoretical approaches, and paradigms in distance education. Others areas covered in this first volume include building research frameworks and providing some examples of praxis regarding the mode of delivery.

In Volume 2, the authors are divided into another three thematic sections and explore regional trends and gaps in distance education research, scholarship in the disciplinary field, and suggest how to build research into practice to improve the quality of the offerings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has now brought down the blurred boundaries between contact and distance education delivery modes. As a result, all higher education institutions were forced to adopt the latter, making the question “Which mode is better?” redundant. Now researchers and specialists in the field need to explore how they can enhance their practices.

We acknowledge that these volumes cannot attend to all questions in one field. It is our hope, however, that these two volumes will help to boost the quality of practice.

Distance education is indeed the *New Normal!*

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