Book 1

Conclusion

Folake Ruth Aluko, University of Pretoria and Daniella Coetzee, University of the Free State

In Book 1 of the series *Does Distance Education in the Developing Context Need More Research? Building Practice into Theory* the first three thematic sections were dealt with in thirteen chapters.

These were:

1. History, philosophical and theoretical approaches, and paradigms in distance education
2. Building frameworks in distance education research
3. Praxis in distance education research

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The authors have attempted to justify why research into distance education is important and ground the practice on sound philosophical and theoretical foundations. In doing so, they citing some examples of praxis in the field.

   In the second book, readers can look forward to exploring other regional trends and gaps, scholarship, and quality assurance in distance education research.

Biographies

Folake Ruth Aluko

Dr Folake Ruth Aluko is a researcher within the Unit for Distance Education at the University of Pretoria. She manages the quality of the institution's distance education (DE) programmes. Ruth facilitates training and workshops and is involved in the evaluation of DE (Open Distance Learning [ODL]) programmes. Ruth is a co-editor of the books Assuring Institutional Quality in Open Distance Learning in the Developing Contexts and Exploring Dual and Mixed Mode Provision of Distance Education. She is the Chief Editor of the *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning* (in Africa and other Developing contexts) open journal, and she has served two terms as President of the National Association of Distance Education in Southern Africa (NADEOSA). Ruth is also the Treasurer of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA). Her research focus areas include quality management of ODL programmes, mobile learning, access, social justice, programme evaluation, student support, and teacher professional development. Ruth is a National Research Foundation (NRF) rated researcher, a peer review system that assesses the standing of South African researchers.

Mohini Baijnath

Mohini Baijnath is an educational researcher and project manager. Through her work with Neil Butcher and Associates and OER Africa, she has engaged with an array of stakeholders to conduct research and evaluation, and design instructional materials. Mohini's work has spanned several stages of education including schooling, technical and vocational education and training, higher education, and workforce training. Her research interests, in which she has also published, include open educational resources, educational technology, artificial intelligence, and education policy. Mohini obtained her Master's degree in Sociology, and her Honours in Social Anthropology, both from the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Geesje van den Berg

Geesje van den Berg is a full Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a Commonwealth of Learning Chair in open distance learning (ODL) for teacher education. Her research focuses on student interaction, academic capacity building, openness in education, and teachers' use of technology in ODL. She has published widely as a sole author and co-author with colleagues and students in ODL and curriculum studies. She leads a collaborative academic capacity-building project for UNISA academics in ODL between Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany and UNISA. She is the programme manager of the structured Master's in Education (ODL) programme and teaches two modules. Numerous master's and doctoral students have completed their studies under her supervision.

Jean Henry Blignaut

Jean Henry Blignaut, PhD in Curriculum Studies, is a senior lecturer in Curriculum Studies and an active member of the research entity Self-Directed Learning (SDL) in the Faculty of Education at North-West University (NWU). He has spent the last decade researching and teaching at various academic institutions, including public and private institutions. His previous roles include Head of Department for Business and Humanities faculties, Information Technology Programme Manager, academic advisor, and curriculum designer. In the academic field of Curriculum Studies, he lectures students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in contact and distance modes of delivery. In addition, he is the programme leader for the Bachelor of Education Honours within the School of Professional Studies in Education of the Faculty of Education at NWU. He has collaborated in writing nine conference papers thus far, all presented at various national and international conferences. His research concentrates on various aspects of education, specifically SDL. He has authored ten published academic journal papers/ book chapters since he was appointed at the NWU. He also regularly reviews academic journal articles and book chapters submitted for publication. In addition, he serves as a supervisor to postgraduate masters and PhD students.

Neil Butcher

Neil is passionate about helping governments, development partners, and educational institutions to reform education systems to enable people and societies to achieve their full human potential. Having worked in education in developing countries across the globe for over 30 years, Neil recognizes that there are no simple formulae for educational reform; each context is unique, as are the people who inhabit it. Thus, providing service to initiatives focused on education reform requires the willingness to listen and understand what is most important, combined with a patient conviction that transformation, no matter how difficult it may seem, is possible. Neil is based in South Africa and has travelled extensively through the developing world conducting research on educational policy, higher education, TVET, distance education, education management information systems (EMIS), and educational technology for a range of organisations, governments, and donors. He works with OER Africa as the project's OER Strategist and is also currently consulting to the World Bank on a range of project activities across Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Daniella Coetzee   267

Prof. Daniella Coetzee is currently retired and a research associate at the Free State University in South Africa. She was formerly the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Policy Studies, the Dean of the School of Open Learning, and the Principal of the Free State University's campus of open learning until 2020. She was the President of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) from 2018 to 2019 and formerly President of the Education Association of South Africa (EASA). Her publications focus on policy studies in education, ideology critique, and open distance learning. She supervised more than fifty MEd and PhD students in Philosophy of Education and is currently conducting research in Higher Education in South Africa.

Jennifer Glennie

Ms Glennie is the founding director of Saide, a not-for-profit organisation committed to enabling successful open learning for all. She has overseen a variety of interventions giving practical expression to open learning principles, particularly through the application of appropriate educational technology, open education resources (OER), and distance education strategies. Current examples are Saide's OER Africa (www.oerafrica.org), working with universities to create and use OER, and African Storybook (www.africanstorybook.org)—facilitating the development of a plentiful supply of accessible storybooks in local languages and reflecting local contexts to promote the love of reading. The application of appropriate quality criteria for distance education has been a focus throughout the years, as has been the collaborative development of open courseware. She was a founding member of South Africa's Council on Higher Education and Higher Education Quality Committee, serving for twelve years. She served as South Africa's representative on the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) Governing Body for two terms. She was the founding President of the National Association for Distance and Open Education in South Africa. She served on the Unisa Council for many years, chaired the five-person Interim Council to establish Sol Plaatje University, serving on its Council for two terms as Deputy Chair. She has received honorary awards from both CoL and the University of Pretoria.

Mario Landman

Dr. Mario Landman, an experienced academic management professional with over fifteen years in private higher education, humbly endeavours to foster positive change and growth. His career exemplifies a lifelong commitment to learning and skill diversification.

In various domains, Mario has demonstrated his strengths. He takes pride in envisioning innovative educational programmes that align with evolving student needs and industry demands. E-education technologies are a focus of his, ensuring that students have access to cutting-edge online resources. His dedication to faculty development empowers educators with the latest pedagogical methods.

Efficient operational management is another aspect of Mario's expertise, optimising resources and institutional efficiency. He remains dedicated to upholding rigorous academic quality standards and ensuring the best education for students. Mario humbly navigates the complex world of

educational regulations, maintaining compliance with grace.

A holistic approach to comprehensive student support services underscores his philosophy, providing an enriching educational experience. Marios career exemplifies his dedication to nurturing academic excellence and inspiring growth. As a lifelong learner and visionary, he continues to serve as a guide in the field of academic management, setting an example, and encouraging others to reach greater heights in their pursuit of academic excellence.

Tony Lelliott

Dr Tony Lelliott is a programme specialist (in the area of teacher education) with Saide, an NGO based in Johannesburg, South Africa. At Saide he is co-leader of the OER Africa continuous professional development (CPD) project and has been involved in a number of research projects. He produced a landscape review for the Teacher Professional Development@Scale coalition for the Global South and managed the production of a book titled *Learning about Sustainable Change in Education in South Africa* which researched a schooling intervention in KwaZulu Natal. He has also participated in materials development projects for the Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa. Prior to joining Saide, Tony worked at the University of the Witwatersrand where was in several leadership roles over the years including as Director and Dean. Tony is the author of 25 publications in refereed journals and books, as well as 47 local and international conference papers. He has supervised ten doctoral and thirteen master graduates to completion.

Cosmas Maphosa

Professor Cosmas Maphosa is a full Professor of Education Management and holds a Doctor of Education degree in Education Management. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Open and Distance Learning with the University of South Africa. He has worked in the higher education sector since 2003 as a lecturer, researcher, senior academic development practitioner, senior lecturer, associate professor, and full professor. He is currently Professor and Director in the Institute of Distance of Education in the University of Eswatini. He has published one book, six book chapters, and one hundred and thirty-five journal articles in accredited scientific journals to date. Cosmas has, to date, successfully supervised fifteen full-thesis PhD candidates. His research interests are in education management, curriculum development, as well as open and distance e-learning.

Tony Mays

Tony Mays is the current education specialist for open schooling at the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver, Canada, and also the managing Associate Editor of the Journal of Learning for Development. He completed his undergraduate studies in the United Kingdom and then started his career as a secondary school teacher in Malawi through a posting organised by the British charity Voluntary Service Overseas, in a school which supported both traditional full-time day scholars as well as non-traditional learners registered with the Malawi College of Distance Education. His interest in teaching and learning through both contact and distance education methods, as well as combinations thereof, continued throughout his subsequent career which increasingly focused on teacher development through distance education and then also on distance education, working with Promat Colleges, Saide, the University of Pretoria, and the University of South Africa. He is a former President of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA), former Honorary Treasurer of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA), and former chair of the biennial Distance Education and Teachers Training in Africa (DETA) conference. Tony holds a DEd in Curriculum Studies from the University of South Africa.

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Irénée Ndayambaje

Dr. Irénée Ndayambaje holds a PhD in Educational Planning. He is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Rwanda, College of Education. He has taught in different higher learning institutions, published several papers in peer-reviewed journals, and co-authored books and book chapters. He also served as the Director General of the Rwanda Education Board under the Ministry of Education of Rwanda. He has successfully served as a consultant of regional and international agencies such as the International Labor Organisation (ILO), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Education Development Trust (EDT), African Institute for Development and Policy (AFIDEP), UNICEF, USAID, UNESCO, FHI 360, World Vision, and Save the Children. Dr Irénée fluently speaks English, French, and Kinyarwanda.

Epimaque Niyibizi

Epimaque Niyibizi is an Associate Professor of Applied English and Literacy Education in the School of Education, College of Education, at the University of Rwanda. He is currently the Deputy Dean in the School of Education. He holds a PhD in Applied Languages and Literacy Education from the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), a master's degree in applied Linguistics from UNISA, a master's degree in educational and social research Methods from the University of Rwanda, College of Education. He did a postdoctoral fellowship in educational leadership and management at the University of Johannesburg (South Africa). He has published journal articles and book chapters in applied linguistics, language policy in education, language education, literacy education, language management in multilingual settings, distance education, and educational leadership.

Asteria Nsamba

Dr Asteria Nsamba is a senior lecturer and researcher in the College of Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). She also supervises MA and PhD students. She holds a BEd. degree, a BEd Honours (Educational Management) degree, as well as an MEd and Doctor of Education in Curriculum Studies. Asteria is involved in several collaborative research projects and her current research focuses on strategies and approaches for teaching postgraduate students, as well as student retention and support in open distance education. Other responsibilities as lecturer and researcher involve carrying out community-engaged research with academic and non-academic communities, and her research in this project focuses on parenting styles in safe homes, special educational needs, and support. Asteria has published extensively on open and distance e-learning and student support services and has presented papers at local and international conferences. Her other research interests include instructional technologies, quality assurance, and research methodologies. Asteria is passionate about research and has facilitated capacity building research workshops and provided research support to her colleagues.

Mary Ooko

Dr Ooko is currently the Manager of the Unit for Distance Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. Dr Ooko has experience spanning over a period of thirty years in the teaching/teacher training field and e-learning implementation in higher education. Dr Ooko was the founding chair of the Education Department at Africa Nazarene University and the founding director of the Institute of Open and Distance Learning at Africa Nazarene University between 2008 - 2015. Dr Ooko worked at Kabarak University as the Director of Kabarak University Online from 2015 to 2018 and served briefly at the United States International University, Nairobi, before joining the University of Pretoria. Dr Ooko also worked for the Community of Christ Church, USA as a resource production coordinator in Africa. Dr Ooko holds a Doctoral Degree in Didactics of e-learning from the University of South Africa, and a Master of Science in Educational Leadership Administration from the University Of Nicosia, Cyprus. She is also a holder of a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from Park University, U.S.A, a postgraduate certificate in Academic Practice, York, St. John University in the United Kingdom, and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Speech and Hearing from the State University of New York, New Parltz, U.S.A. Dr Ooko holds a postgraduate certificate in the Management Advancement Program from the University of the Witwatersrand Business School. Her research and published works include technology adoption for teaching/learning, learner support services, management and administration of ODL programmes, quality assurance in distance education, professional development, and faculty support. Dr Ooko is a member of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning of Southern Africa (NADEOSA) and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy of the United Kingdom. She is also a member of the Board of Trustees at the South Africa Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE).

Emmanuel Sibomana

Emmanuel Sibomana holds a PhD degree in Language and Literacy Education from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa, and has taught at universities in Rwanda and South Africa. As established researcher, he has presented papers at local and international conferences and has extensively published in the areas of educational policy and practice, language and literacy education, language policy, and (distance) teacher education. Emmanuel is currently working as a Director of Policy and Programs at the Wellspring Foundation for Education. This a non-governmental organisation that aims to be a catalyst for transforming education in Africa and addressing poverty in all its forms by empowering school leaders, teachers, and parents to effectively play their roles in supporting learning.

Charlene du Toit-Brits

Charlene du Toit-Brits (PhD) is a Professor and an NRF-rated researcher (C2 rating) in Curriculum Studies at the North-West University. She has actively trained NWU Faculty of Education teachers in distance education and full-time education programmes. She has specifically been involved in designing different academic programmes for in-service training of school principals, teachers, and education students in various subject specialities: Curriculum Studies, Comparative Education, and Research Methodology. Her research focuses on various elements of self-directed learning (SDL) within teacher education and fosters SDL among teachers and school learners. Her research aims to inform the 21st-century workplace and learning environment to enhance lifelong SDL and to inform scholarship on SDL within the unique South African landscape. Charlene has published several articles in various national and international journals and academic books and has supervised several master's and PhD students.

Merridy Wilson-Strydom

Merridy is a senior researcher and project manager at Neil Butcher and Associates (NBA) with twenty years of experience doing social and educational research in both traditional academic and applied environments. Merridy has worked at all levels of the education sector in South Africa and other developing country contexts, including schooling, technical and vocational education and training, community colleges, universities, and skills development. She is well versed in qualitative and quantitative research methods, monitoring and evaluation, institutional research, participatory, and action research. She has published widely in national and international journals, has published two scholarly books, and was an Associate Editor (Education and Social Sciences) for the South African Journal of Science from 2015–2017. Merridy has a PhD in Higher Education Studies from the University of the Free State and an MPhil in Development Studies from Oxford University, which she attended as a Rhodes Scholar. Amongst other clients, she is currently working with Arizona State University (ASU) as evaluation partner for the Baobab Social Learning Platform and with VVOB as learning partner in a project focused on professional development on learning through play in the Early Childhood Education sector.