

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.

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Samuel O. Babalola

Dr Samuel O. Babalola holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Design from the University of Ibadan (UI), Nigeria. He is also a lecturer in the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education UI where he teaches curriculum courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. His research interest includes mainstreaming the UN SDGs into university curricula as a means of preparing graduates with competencies to solve the challenges of sustainability. He is passionate about fostering in-demand employability skills among university students for gainful employment post-graduation, having pioneered the Hult Prize in UI in 2016. Samuel has extensive skills in educational and curriculum research. He is also skilful in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research techniques with proficiency in the handling and analysis of large data, using different software. He is competent in delivering engaging lessons in on-site and virtual mode

to promote effective teaching-learning interaction. He is a member of several professional bodies and has published journal articles and contributed to chapters in books. Samuel has participated in several curriculum design/review projects within the University of Ibadan and served as consultant in curriculum development for the West Africa Health Organization (WAHO), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the Data Scientists Network (DSN).

Daniella Coetzee

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.

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Karen Ferreira-Meyers

Associate Professor Ferreira-Meyers (Institute of Distance Education, University of Eswatini, Eswatini) is the Coordinator Linguistics and Modern Languages at the Institute of Distance Education of the University of Eswatini in Eswatini. In addition to her regular research work and publications in the field of open, distance and e-learning; open education; open schooling; quality assurance in education; self-directed learning; artificial intelligence; and digital transformation, she is an internationally recognised expert in the teaching and learning of languages, as well as crime and detective fiction, memory studies, autofiction, autobiography, and life writing. She has published over 100 papers, various book chapters, and two books. She enjoys working collaboratively and has been tasked with the leading of project teams on several occasions. She is a keen translator and interpreter, publishes book reviews (on fiction and non-fiction), and actively participates in several

communities of practice. Karen has a strong track record in teacher development in Southern African contexts and has expertise in the area of blended, distance, and e-learning, and teaching.

Lynette Jacobs

Prof. Lynette Jacobs leads research in the Office for International Affairs at the University of the Free State. She is also currently the Acting Director of the office. Her research centres around inclusive education opportunities, barriers to such, and specifically on inclusive internationalised learning approaches. She contributed to more than 50 peer-reviewed publications in the form of journal articles, conference proceedings, and book chapters. She is one of the working group leaders in the iKudu Erasmus+ project that focuses on developing a contextualised South African concept of internationalisation of the curriculum, which includes collaborative online international learning. She is an NRF-rated scholar, and has supervised more than 30 masters and PhD students to completion.

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Angela Ndunge Kamanga

Angela Ndunge Kamanga is an education officer, Directorate of Teacher Education, Ministry of Education, Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya. Angela specializes in science education, educational projects/programme implementation and management. She holds a Master of Education, Science Education; postgraduate diploma in education; and a Bachelor of Science (chemistry and zoology). Angela has taught science subjects in Kenyan secondary schools and authored articles in referred journals and book chapters.

Florence Kisirkoi

Prof. Florence Kisirkoi is an associate professor of Curriculum Studies in Maasai Mara University where she teaches Curriculum Studies courses and has held many positions as Director of Gender, Equity, and Culture; Deputy Director of postgraduate studies, eaching practice, and examinations coordinator. Florence holds a PhD and a Master of Education in Curriculum Studies and Bachelor

of Education, Literature, and English Language. She worked as a curriculum development specialist with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development where she was the Deputy Director of Teacher Education Programmes. She also taught English language and literature in secondary schools. Florence researches in teacher education, particularly teacher professional development, and has co-authored school course books, teachers' reference books, university level textbooks, and over 25 articles in referred journals and books chapters. These include: (1) secondary English students books, used in all Kenya's secondary schools: *Excelling in English: An integrated approach Form One Students' Book* and *Excelling in English-An Integrated approach Form Two*. Furthermore, this includes (2) *Becoming an Effective Teacher. A Teaching Reference Book for Teachers, Teacher Educators and Student Teachers*. Florence is also a TESSA ambassador and trains and researches teacher professional development through distance education mode.

Tony Mays

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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.

Ephraim Mhlanga

Ephraim is a Programme Specialist: Quality Assurance at *Saide*. Ephraim holds a PhD in Quality Assurance in Higher Education from the University of the Witwatersrand. He has supported a number of countries in Southern Africa in developing quality assurance frameworks for both contact and open and distance learning institutions. On behalf of the Commonwealth of Learning, he has also supported the development of quality assurance policies for open schools in South East Asia and in the South Pacific Island countries. He has extensive experience in working with African universities on various projects since he joined *Saide* in 2007. Ephraim has also provided technical expertise to the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) to develop the ACDE Quality Assurance Toolkit for distance education, which is now widely used by a number of distance higher education institutions in Africa. His research interests are in higher education, with a particular focus on quality assurance. Ephraim has several publications in this area, including the following book: Mhlanga, E. (2013) *Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Southern Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, Peter Lang Ltd, Oxford.

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Margaret Funke Omidire

Margaret Funke Omidire is a full Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Pretoria. She is involved in school-based intervention research and learning/learner support focused on multilingualism and multilingual education. She is also interested in the reconceptualisation of education in sub-Saharan Africa. She is a registered educational psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the Programme Coordinator—MEd Educational Psychology. In addition, Funke is chair of the Ethics Committee, Faculty of Education and the 2023 outgoing chairperson of the Education Association of South Africa (EASA), a member of the International Association of Multilingualism and the Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), University of Pretoria. She is an NRF C2-rated researcher.

Nelia Oosthuysen

Nelia Oosthuysen is leading the Portfolio on Data Management within the Director's Office in the Office for International Affairs, at the University of the Free State (UFS). Her portfolio is responsible for research support and database development and maintenance. She was previously employed on the South Campus for Open Distance Learning. She holds a MCom in Computer Science, as well as a postgraduate diploma in Education (PGDE).

Santosh Panda

Santosh Panda, PhD, is Professor of Distance Education and Director at the Staff Training and Research Institute, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, India. In the past he has been: Director, Inter-University Consortium for ICT, IGNOU; Director (Policy and Research), Association of Indian Universities (AIU); Director, Centre for Flexible Learning, The University of the South Pacific, Fiji; a senior Fulbright Scholar, University of New Mexico, USA; and Chairperson of the national regulator National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Government of India. He has also been visiting professor at: University of London/UK, Manchester Metropolitan University/UK, Beijing Normal University/China, University of Guadalajara/Mexico, and adjunct professor at the University of Maryland University College/USA. His two books on DE have been published by Routledge, UK/USA, and one book on pedagogy by Bloomsbury, UK/USA. His specialisation and current research areas include: distance/online/blended learning, costing and funding of distance and online learning, technology and teacher education, continuing professional development, OER and open sharing, MOOCs, higher education accreditation and quality assurance, open schooling, vocational education and training, research and programme evaluation. He is the chief editor of an internationally refereed and Scopus-indexed quarterly *Journal of Learning for Development* (<https://jl4d.org/index.php/ejl4d>), published by The Commonwealth of Learning, Canada. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0617-8737>. Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.co.in/citations?user=BDKQEiMAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>
Leaders & Legends of Online Learning: <https://onlinelearninglegends.com/podcast/084-professor-santosh-panda/>. Email: spanda.ignou@gmail.com.

Jennifer Roberts

Jennifer Roberts is an associate professor in the Institute for Open and Distance Learning (IODL) at the University of South Africa. She is skilled in research design, educational technology and ODeL research training. Professor Roberts has an ongoing interest in research capacity building in developing countries, as well as staff capacity building in open distance learning institutions. She is widely published in distance education, discipline in education, metacognition, research trends and staff development and has presented papers around the world. Jenny was the first South African to be elected to the executive committee of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA), where she was vice-president and publications officer and has also twice guest edited the Distance Education Journal. In 2021, she was acknowledged by the AD Scientific Index as a member of the top 10 000 influential scientists on the African continent and occupied the number three position in Africa for Distance Education research. In addition, she is a founding member of the international Centre for Open Educational Research (COER), a group that is funded by the German government to disseminate research on the curation of open educational resources in higher education.

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Mmabaledi Kefilwe Seeletso

Dr Mmabaledi Kefilwe Seeletso is the Director for the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), based at Botswana Open University. She specialises in open and distance learning, lifelong learning, online learning, research supervision and examination, among others. She has worked in an open and distance learning environment for over twenty years. Mmabaledi read for her degree in Humanities and postgraduate Diploma in Education at the University of Botswana in 1996 and 1997 respectively. She then studied towards her MA in Educational Management which she obtained in 2004, from the University of Bath, United Kingdom. Mmabaledi acquired her PhD from the University of Pretoria in 2016. She was a recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship, during which she served at the University of Denver as a visiting scholar from August 2017 to January 2018. She is also the University of Bath Ambassador in Botswana and a member of the UKRI International Peer Review College. Mmabaledi served as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, based at the UNESCO Chair on ODL from May 2019 to March 2021. She has published several peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters.