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OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING AND ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE BOTSWANA EXPERIENCE

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

IN

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Department of Educational Management & Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

SOUTH AFRICA

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May 2011

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DECLARATION

"I declare that the thesis which I hereby submit for the degree

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my brother Mr Tshwene Nage, the only father I've ever known, following our father's untimely death when I was still an infant. Thank you my brother for your unconditional love and all the sacrifices you made in life for me. God bless you abundantly.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed immensely in different ways towards the state at which this thesis is at present. I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the contribution they made profusely.

My family made the most selfless sacrifice and support I can ever thank them enough for. My husband Mr Thomas Sibande patiently toiled without a wife for five years, while his wife was invisible around the house, buried in books and the computer day in and day out. I suspect there are very few husbands like mine out there, who have that kind of unwavering support for their wife's quest for further education. Some husbands can borrow a leaf. My children and siblings watched me in true amazement and awe, to see the kind of suffering one can put herself through for education. My grandsons left the house for the last three months of the journey, to allow me to concentrate and also to give themselves a chance to continue being free, playful, happy children. All this turned out to be worth it for the whole family, including my extended Katuta and Makgabenyana families.

I would not have made it through that long hectic journey to where I am without the patient mentoring support of my Supervisor Professor WJ van Vollenhoven, assisted by Dr J Hendrikz. The only three years remaining at our disposal to cover a heavy laden four year programme were truly challenging to me. You did a tremendous job Prof, thank you.

Professor A Amey, Dr D R Tau and Dr G Gatsha, thank you so much for those comments and advice. They went a very long way. I would like to thank my colleagues Mr P Sebopelo and Mrs P Makgabenyana for agreeing to join my family, my daughter Ms Mosidi Mokaeya and my sister Mrs Lydia Motingwa, at short notice to edit the manuscript as far as they could. That helped a great deal. Mr Ntuma, thank you so much, professional editing was a must.

BOCODOL Management and staff were amazingly supportive, particularly in the last two months of my journey. My office door is now open, things are back to normal. Thank you so much colleagues.

Thank you all and God bless.

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*** Available on CD-ROM**

Abbreviations & Acronyms

AACE	-	Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education
APR	-	Age Participation Rates
BA LIS	-	Bachelor of Arts Library and Information Studies
BERA	-	British Educational Research Association
BFTU	-	Botswana Federation of Trade Unions
BOCODOL	-	Botswana College of Distance & Open Learning
BUIST	-	Botswana International University of Science & Technology
CAD	-	Centre for Academic Development
CSO	-	Central Statistics Office
CCE	-	Centre for Continuing Education
CDC	-	Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
CHET	-	Centre for Higher Education Transformation
COL	-	Commonwealth of Learning
DEASA	-	Distance Education Association of Southern Africa
DE	-	Distance Education
DDE	-	Department of Distance Education
DNFE	-	Department of Non-Formal Education
DTEF	-	Department of Tertiary Education & Financing
DoE	-	Department of Education
EFA	-	Education for All
GATS	-	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GER	-	Gross Enrolment Ratios
HDI	-	Human Development Index
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technologies
ICT	-	Internet and Communication Technologies
IIEP	-	International Institute for Educational Planning
MOESD	-	Ministry of Education & Skills Development
NDP	-	National Development Plan
NRI	-	Networked Readiness Index
ODL	-	Open and Distance Learning
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OUT	-	Open University of Tanzania

PCF	-	Pan Commonwealth Forum
RNPE	-	Revised National Policy on Education
RISDP	-	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	-	Southern African Development Community
SARUA	-	Southern African Regional Universities Association
TEC	-	Tertiary Education Council
UB	-	University of Botswana
UBLS	-	University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNAM	-	University of Namibia
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNISA	-	University of South Africa
UNZA	-	University of Zambia
UP	-	University of Pretoria
USA	-	United States of America
USQ	-	University of Southern Queensland
Wits	-	University of Witwatersrand
ZOU	-	Zimbabwe Open University

Abstract

This qualitative study based on the interpretive/constructivist perspective, investigates the environment in which ODL addresses high and diversified demands for participation in higher education in Botswana. The driving concern for the study is the apparent low enrolments through the ODL mode of delivery in some dual mode institutions in Southern Africa. The scope of the study is the Botswana higher education sector, with UB, which is the only public dual mode higher education institution in Botswana, being the case studied. The main investigation question is "why do some dual mode higher education institutions in Southern Africa continue to enrol lower figures through their ODL than their face-to-face mode of delivery, though ODL is purported to have the potential to increase access more substantially than face-to-face". Data collection methods are semi-structured interviews and document review. Participants are purposively selected from UB, TEC and MOESD, based on their experience in planning, policy and implementation of the ODL mode of delivery. Qualitative content analysis is the method of analysis.

The major findings of the study are that ODL in the UB dual mode system has grown very slowly, resulting in insignificant impact on increasing participation in higher education in Botswana. This study has indicated some external and internal challenges that ODL might experience in some dual mode settings, as well as opportunities that can be taken advantage of to grow the mode. It has also indicated that ODL has the potential to address the challenges of high and diversified demands, if it could benefit from pre-planning, adequate resources, monitored implementation and appropriately trained staff. The conclusion drawn is that Botswana needs ODL for increased participation in higher education. The study ends with possible areas of future research around ICT environment for the growth of ODL and enhancement of equivalency where both ODL and face-to-face are considered for higher education provision.

Keywords: ODL, higher education, demands, participation, value, effectiveness, strategy, growth, equivalency, access