EDITORIAL

This issue of DEOSNEWS presents an article on distance education in Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Authors Zindi and Aucoin relate the colonial history of distance education in the two countries, discuss developments since independence, including government initiatives and barriers to implementation, and suggest areas on which educators and government must focus to ensure the success of distance education in Africa.

IS DISTANCE EDUCATION THE ANSWER?
FOCUS ON TANZANIA AND ZIMBABWE

Fred Zindi and Robert Aucoin
Concordia University
Department of Education
1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd West
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8
Canada
RAUCO@VAX2.CONCORDIA.CA

INTRODUCTION

Tanzania, formerly known as Tanganyika, became independent from British rule in 1961. Nearly 20 years later, in 1980, Zimbabwe, formerly known as Southern Rhodesia, then Rhodesia, achieved independence from the ruling white minority government.

In order to fulfil the aspirations of the masses, the majority of whom had been denied the right to education during the colonial era, on attaining independence both Tanzania and Zimbabwe adopted policies of free universal education for primary and secondary school pupils. This politically appropriate decision to expand the education system soon resulted in an enormous drain on the economies of the two countries. It took Zimbabwe only 10 years after independence to reverse the policy of free education. By 1991, pupils were required to pay fees.

One solution to the difficulties experienced in financing educational programmes in the midst of the economic turmoil in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe and to solving problems such as the shortage of teachers, shortage of classrooms, and the high cost of maintaining a conventional educational system, was to return to the cost-effective methods used in the colonial era. One such method was through distance education.
**ADVANTAGES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

In many African countries, competing social needs such as health, food, transport, and education pose a great problem for those governments with limited resources. Distance education, because it does not require large investments in physical facilities, teachers, or text books, becomes appealing. If properly managed and organised, distance education is indeed cost-effective. Distance education is an individualized form of instruction and is therefore capable of catering to individual needs. It is flexible: a student can work at his/her own pace during his/her own time and there is no age limit as to who should take distance education courses. It is also comparatively cheaper than the conventional system of education and therefore students can afford to pay the required fees. People who would otherwise be marginalized by the conventional educational system--such as women with children, workers, and disabled people--can take courses through distance education because of its flexibility.

**WEAKNESS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

In Tanzania, the budget for adult-education and distance education programmes is around 10% of the total amount budgeted to the Ministry of Education (Dahwa, 1993). Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Education spends less than 5% of its annual budget on adult and distance education. Because of the small budgets prescribed for distance education in these countries, the payment of salaries to mentors, the parity of esteem between distance and conventional education, continued use of unrevised learning materials, the lack of well remunerated education officers to monitor the quality of educational input, and limited expenditure on workshops or study group programmes, the perception of those people who choose to study through distance education is one of mass-produced programmes which are inferior to conventional systems. Consequently, both Tanzania and Zimbabwe’s distance education programmes have been plagued with problems such as delayed feedback, inability to deal with individual needs, and a lack of student motivation.

**REASONS FOR THE RISE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

During the colonial period, distance education in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe was largely a response by voluntary organizations to the desires of many Africans to acquire formal academic education; this was a time when educational opportunities at the secondary school level were limited to very few Africans, usually those who made the ‘A’ grade in English and Arithmetic (Wakatama, 1983).

In 1954 the Central African Correspondence College was established and many Africans in the then Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland registered as private candidates for study by correspondence from this college. Later, in 1962, the Rapid Results College was established in both Zimbabwe and Tanzania (Ntirukigwa, 1986; Wedemeyer, 1966). Other colleges included Transworld Tutorial, International Correspondence Schools, Wosley College, and The British Tutorial College. These colleges were established in Africa to cash in on the lack of educational opportunities faced by many Africans under colonial regimes. The governments in the
colonial era also felt that they could not spend inordinate resources on formal education among Africans, because this was a sure way of creating a class of people who would challenge the legitimacy of those governments. The undeterred Africans, however, sought alternative education: studying through distance education.

Distance education also provided a palliative for the colonial conscience: by providing the foreign currency to register with foreign educational institutions, the governments felt that they were doing at least something for the Africans. However, distance education made very minimal demands on the national fiscus since no new buildings, no text books and no per capita grants were provided by government. The only expense was for salaries of a few education officers who monitored the programme. It is only the cost-effectiveness of distance education that has kept it alive in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

THE STATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

The Pre-independence Period

Distance education in Tanzania has a long history; prior to independence there were several private institutions offering various forms of distance education. However, these institutions were foreign and were more correspondence schools than true distance education institutions, since they did not offer face-to-face contact. These institutions included International Correspondence Schools, the Wosley College, British Tutorial College, and The Rapid Results College (Ntirukigwa, 1986).

The Post-Independence Period

With independence in 1961 came a multitude of problems, including a largely uneducated population and a high annual growth rate of 3.5%. At this rate the population would double every twenty years. In addition to the high growth rate, 48% of Tanzanians were under the age of 15 and were, therefore, of school age. Other problems included a very low per capita income of US $100, which is the second lowest in the world, after Mozambique. These problems made the need for full scale educational expansion obvious.

Tanzanian adults also wanted and needed to be educated, since the colonial era had denied most of them that right, as was the case with most colonial regimes. The result was the concurrent expansion of the education system at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. This was an enormous drain on a new country that was already spending 20-30% of its GNP on education. For all of these reasons, the new Tanzanian government decided to embark on large-scale educational programmes; distance education programmes were to play a major part due to their relative cost efficiency. Officially, the government of Tanzania introduced distance education programmes for two reasons: "i) to provide mass education on a wide scale and ii) to provide professional training for nationals in post teachers (sic), cooperative/ development workers." (Magnus, 1991).

Distance education in Tanzania, as in many African nations, has followed four different paths: correspondence institutes; radio programmes used to improve residential instruction; radio and visual campaigns to promote literacy, health and other issues
of national importance; and formal distance education and training institutions. The development of distance education has followed a chronological hierarchy ranging from correspondence schools in the 1960's to a proposal for a full-scale open university in the late 1980's.

The emergence of true distance education in Tanzania began in 1970 with the melding of the Institute for Adult Education (IAE) and the National Correspondence Institution (NCI) based at the University of Dar Es Salaam and supported jointly by the Government of Tanzania and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). These institutions had been involved in correspondence and radio programmes since 1967, but it was only in 1970 that they made the move towards true distance education. The objectives of IAE and NCI are to produce correspondence courses to serve a variety of needs including "'mass' courses at a basic educational level in important subjects and academic courses in secondary-school subjects for adults, including many teachers and professional courses" (Young, 1980). In addition to the printed course materials, IAE and NCI provide radio broadcasts and face-to-face meetings between students and tutors, who occasionally visit the regions outside of Dar Es Salaam.

Currently NCI has 70,470 students enrolled in 23 courses that include "basic school education/ further education at school and basic professional training (e.g. preparation for A-levels, high school certificate and entrance qualifications for university studies, upper secondary level, technical college etc.)/ university study and further professional training (after basic professional training and/ or job experience); Teacher Training, Certificate Grade A." (Doerfert, 1989).

NCI does not use local study centres and, as a result, face-to-face contact is voluntary if it is offered at all. However, the lack of formal study centres allows for much flexibility in pacing and teaching methods as well as flexibility in options for students. For example, students decide when they will start their courses, when they will order their materials, and when they will send in their assignments.

Materials are developed by members of course teams, which consist of subject specialists and editors only and do not include instructional designers or distance education specialists. However, NCI is able to formatively evaluate all materials that are used by their learners. At this time all course materials are written course units and there are no immediate plans to change or expand this medium.

Despite the lack of student study centres, there is student support in the form of two-way communication through the correction of assignments, comments on assignments, answering learners' questions and requests, and contacts with learners initiated by either the institution or the learner. The media used in the two-way communication include written correspondence, telephone, and direct (face-to-face) contacts (Doerfert, 1989).

Although the quality of the materials has been evaluated and found to be high, there has been no evaluation of the graduates. It has been found that the average success rate is only 35% and the non-starter rate is 25%, according to 1972-1984 figures (Doerfert, 1989). To reduce non-starter and drop out rates, NCI has begun mailing standardized letters of encouragement or reminders and has implemented visits to learners by people appointed by the institution.
NCI has been very successful and continues to address educational problems in Tanzania. So far, 35,000 teachers have been trained under NCI. NCI does have plans to expand its services by "introducing diploma and certificate courses in management and administration. Also technical and vocational courses are being planned in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, tailoring, radio and electric technology and motor mechanics," and including more face-to-face contact between the institution and students (Young, 1980, p.217, Magnus, 1991).

In 1976 the Arusha Appropriate Technology Project: Local Production Programme (AATP) was initiated to encourage rural people to help design and produce teaching materials (Young, 1980). These teaching materials are used in local discussion groups to discuss local problems. Among the types of projects addressed under the AATP was the Kisigis Homesteads Cattle-dip Management Programme. Through this programme, models, pictures, slides, and cassette recorders have been used to demonstrate more effective cattle dipping methods to help reduce health problems associated with cattle. It has been noted that hoof and mouth disease as well as tick-borne diseases have dropped in the area since the implementation of the programme. Other projects sponsored by the AATP have included discussions with womens’ groups on topics ranging from baby care to agriculture (Young, 1980).

The last distance education institution in Tanzania was the South African Extension Unit (SAEU), which started operations in 1984. However, the SAEU has been operating in other African countries for many years (Magnus, 1991). The aim of the SAEU is to provide educational opportunities to South African exiles living in Tanzania and other Frontline states, including Angola, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Currently the SAEU has a staff of 11 and is sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CTEC), United Nations Education and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and NORAD.

There were 1350 students enrolled in SAEU programmes in 1989 (the last year for which data was available) in subjects ranging from "English, Mathematics and Agriculture to O and A level courses imported from Wolsey Hall and Metropolitan College, UK... including Mathematics, English, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Sociology, Principles of Accounts, Economics, Business and Law." (Magnus, 1991). All programmes covered a range of educational levels from basic education to secondary education to adult non-formal education. All courses are designed in cooperation with the Tanzania National Correspondence Institution and employ a variety of media including correspondence units, audio-cassette programmes, weekend schools, and face-to-face meetings (Magnus, 1991).

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA

In December of 1989, the Commonwealth of Learning published a proposal--"The Role of Media Technology Within the Proposed Open University of Tanzania"--for an Open University to be based in Dar Es Salaam (Cutting, 1989). There has been very little, if anything, done to act on the proposal for an open university in Tanzania; however, the proposal itself was
both ambitious and honest, although not a little unrealistic. Cutting called for heavy involvement of the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) to facilitate faster and more efficient communications (Cutting, 1989). Cutting proposed that the PTC be improved to allow for greater speed in mail delivery. In addition, the proposal called for the PTC to install better telephone lines that would be able to accommodate faxes, teleconferencing, and computer technologies. However, in an interview with the Director General of the PTC, F.C. Kasambala, it became clear that this was an unrealistic objective. At the very best it was hoped that these technologies would be ready by the year 2000 (Cutting, 1989).

The proposal also appeals for the expansion of the National Correspondence Institute to facilitate the production of multimedia materials (Cutting, 1989). Given that, in 1989, NCI was having difficulties producing enough materials for its own programmes, it is unlikely that they would be able to also produce materials for an open university. In fact, NCI is currently experiencing severe shortages of trained staff, equipment, and spare parts.

The proposal notes that Tanzania is a very large country with a largely rural population, which makes it a prime candidate for an open university. What the proposal fails to point out is that Tanzania has a very poor transportation system, very poor roads, and many people without access to electricity. The result is that most of the potential learners of an open university would not have access to the types of technologies that the PTC is being asked to provide. It is unfortunate that Cutting did not heed the lesson that Tanzania learned years before: to rely on existing technologies.

Cutting also proposes that Radio Tanzania be used by the open university due to the success it has enjoyed over the years with its own educational broadcasts. However, it is not clear whether or not Radio Tanzania can handle the extra load that an open university would require. Despite this possible limitation, the idea of using Radio Tanzania is probably the most realistic option to be found in the proposal.

THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

As outlined above it was in 1954 that the Central African Correspondence College was established in the then Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, mainly to alleviate the problem of lack of educational facilities for those Africans who could not be accommodated into existing educational institutions. The Judges Report commissioned by the Rhodesian government in 1962 recommended study by correspondence for primary school leavers who wished to further their educational careers but failed to find places in existing secondary schools. By 1975, 60% of Zimbabwe’s Africans taking Junior Certificate and ’O’Level examinations were doing so through distance education (Dahwa, 1993). Most of these students were registered with colleges such as Rapid Results College and Transworld Tutorial. Those who took degree programmes were mainly registered with the University of South Africa. By 1979, over 3,500 students had graduated through correspondence and distance education.

THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The main post-independence distance education programme
initiated by the Zimbabwe government was the Zimbabwe Integrated Teacher Education Course (ZINTEC) (which was UNICEF/Zimbabwe Government Programme of Co-operation). This was established to alleviate a teacher shortage caused by the rapid expansion of the education system at the time of independence. Four colleges in Mutare, Masvingo, Harare, and Gwanda enrolled over 5000 trainee teachers in the first six years of the inception of ZINTEC. By 1986, according to the Ministry of Education, 3903 teachers had graduated from ZINTEC. The programme involved students spending 16 weeks in residence learning theories of education, as well as their teaching subjects. This was followed by three and half years of on-the-job experience for the students, who were assigned to primary schools to teach while simultaneously receiving supervision and distance education modules on both educational theories and teaching courses. After passing the distance education programme, students would then go back to the colleges for another 16 weeks before taking the final examinations.

The 1982 mid-term evaluation of the ZINTEC programme showed that, on the whole, pupils taught by ZINTEC student teachers had better results in their national examinations than those taught by other teachers (Chivore, 1982). The reason given for the effectiveness of the ZINTEC programme was that most students who received distance education courses were able to put theory into practice while they learned on the job, unlike the students from conventional colleges, who spent most of their three years learning theory and were only able to apply it after they had completed their training.

On the basis of another ZINTEC evaluation in 1986, the Ministry of Higher Education moved to transform the ZINTEC National Centre into the National Distance Education Centre. However, due to a drop in the growth of educational opportunities—from 72 percent in 1980 to 54 percent in 1986—the Ministry decided to phase out two of the ZINTEC colleges. Mutare and Masvingo have since become conventional colleges, but still adopt a more or less ZINTEC approach, in which students spend two years in residence and one year of supervised teaching practice in the field.

At independence a number of local and privately owned distance education colleges also were established. For example, Zimbabwe Distance Education College (ZDECO) offered 'O' Level, 'A' Level, and degree programmes. By 1990, nearly 20,000 Zimbabwean students had enrolled with ZDECO. (Ndlovu, 1993). In 1985, the Zimbabwe Integrated system of Secondary Education (ZISSE) was launched to develop methods of reducing teaching costs without compromising the quality of education. This system combined half-time face-to-face teaching by qualified teachers with half-time supervision of self-study groups by mentors using distance learning materials (Kala 1988). A total of 1800 students were enrolled, but numerous problems were encountered in the implementation of ZISSE. The Ministry of Education did not come up with the supply of materials agreed upon, teachers went without pay for long periods (sometimes up to 12 months), there was a general shortage of teaching staff and transport, and mentors were unwilling to implement the project, which seemed to them to have no direction at all. By 1990 the ZISSE concept was almost history, as less than 100 students were still listed in the ZISSE books.
In 1989, the Adult and Non-Formal Education Division of the Ministry of Education and Culture established the Zimbabwe Institute of Distance Education (ZIDE) to complement private distance education colleges. Due to the failings of the ZISSE concept, enrollment figures after 1987 began to drop. (See Table 1). However, after the establishment of ZIDE, which aimed at promoting and popularizing the concept of Distance Education, enrollment figures began to rise once again.

**TABLE 1: ADULT AND DISTANCE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
<th># of Study Groups</th>
<th># of Mentors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>6,347</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>9,423</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>11,176</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>37,726</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>41,050</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>41,139</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>42,077</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>1,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>40,859</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>40,067</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>28,154</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>36,257</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>37,659</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>42,005</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1993 the University of Zimbabwe established a Distance Education Centre. 1500 students enrolled for the September and January 1994 courses. Although courses are only being offered in Educational Administration at the moment, it is hoped that within two years courses from across all faculties of the university will also be offered through distance education. According to government sources, Zimbabwe will save an estimated $163 million in foreign currency (which is the amount currently paid to foreign correspondence colleges) as a result of localizing degree programming through distance education.

**CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing account it is difficult to say whether or not distance education is the way forward for the implementation of mass education in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe. According
to the 1990 UNESCO report, for distance education to succeed in Africa, educators, planners, and governments must work together and focus on three main areas: information and research, the training of specialists, and the production or acquisitions of materials. Future distance educators will have to show flexibility in their needs assessment, provide training for local experts, increase local participation, use indigenous channels of communication, and improve the two-way flow of information (Ofori-Ansa, 1983).

There is a need for governments to adopt a comprehensive policy on distance education as well as for effective co-operation with Distance Education Colleges. As long as distance education is viewed as a poor cousin of the formal education system, it will not be able to fulfil its role of increasing educational opportunities. There must, therefore, be adequate funding for distance education programmes, with mentors adequately remunerated, as well as an adequate supply of materials and transport before distance education can realize its potential. For now it will suffice to say that distance education is only being used as a means of sustaining cut-backs in formal education by those governments facing economic hardships.

In many western countries, in order to promote distance education, designers of programmes have included packages of high technologies such as electronic mail, internet computer systems, CD Rom units and touchtone telephone communications which provide on-line or off-line generic programmes. Here distance education is viewed in a more positive light since a lot of money is spent on its organization. It is also characterized by two-way communication, technical media and the involvement of a formal or bureaucratic body whereas in Tanzania or Zimbabwe, this kind of organization hardly exists. Apart from the mass distribution of pre-packaged print and broadcasting media, interaction with others and access to resources (such as libraries) is virtually non-existent for those who study at a distance.

A viable system of distance education seems to be a distant goal that can only be achieved when African governments take a more serious role and interest in it by providing the much needed finances to support distance education.

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