



## Address of the President, African Council for Distance Education

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Vice-Chancellor

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I wish on behalf of the Executive Board of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) and on my own behalf to welcome you all to the 6<sup>th</sup> ACDE Triennial Conference. This Conference was supposed to have taken place in April of 2020, however owing to the lockdown it was rescheduled. We are therefore very delighted to be hosting it today here in Ghana, though virtually. With a warm Ghanaian welcome, we say, Nyejaeee, Akwaba.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) is a continental educational organization comprising African universities and other higher education institutions, which are committed to expanding access to quality education and training through Open and Distance Learning (ODL), including e-learning. It is registered under the laws of Kenya as an International educational nonprofit organization, with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. The ACDE is currently the lead implementing agency for Open, Distance and eLearning in Africa.

**Establishment:** The idea of establishing ACDE was first mooted at the SCOP-ICDE<sup>1</sup> conference on distance education held for the first time on the African continent at the University of South Africa (UNISA) Pretoria, in October 2002. It was underpinned by the desire of African Vice-Chancellors to establish a unifying body that would facilitate and promote the pooling of resources, shaping and influencing continental policies on distance education, and collectively sourcing for and tapping into resources available from the national, regional and the

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<sup>1</sup> SCOP-ICDE refers to the Standing Committee of Presidents of the International Council for Distance Education

international community for the advancement of education and training.

**Launch:** ACDE was formally launched in January 2004 at Egerton University, Kenya at a Conference attended by Vice-Chancellors and senior distance education practitioners from seven African countries, presided over by Kenya's Minister for Education. The launching conference ended with the adoption of a Constitution election of officials mainly Vice Chancellors. The Egerton University was also selected to host the interim ACDE Secretariat a role they played until September 2020, when the Secretariat was moved to Kenyatta University. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Egerton University for their support to the ACDE over the 16 years period they hosted it. Since its inception the ACDE has held five Triennial Conferences and General Assembly and this is the sixth.

**Recognition:** ACDE was formally recognized as the lead implementing agency for ODL in Africa during the November 2010 Fourth Conference of Education Ministers in Africa (COMEDAF IV). The conference was held in Mombasa and accorded ACDE Observer Status at the African Union Commission (AUC). This recognition was followed by signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ACDE and the AUC in July 2011.

The Third Pan African Conference on Teacher Development (PACTED III) and Fifth Conference of Ministers of Education in Africa (COMEDAF V) at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa in 2013 identified ACDE as the Lead Coordinating Agency for the Continental Teacher Development Roadmap (AU/EDUC/PACTED/RDMAP/2). The objective was to enhance **greater use of distance learning to improve access to teacher training**. Further, ACDE was appointed among lead partners to be involved in the attainment of the following goals:

- i. Enhancing the use of ODL to increase access to and the quality of teacher training and promotion of the professional development of teachers
- ii. Improve performance in Science, Mathematics and Technology to reflect life skills and labour market demands.

Going forward the ACDE will reprioritize teacher education and ODeL for Science, Mathematics and Technology education.

**Membership:** ACDE is a member of the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA - UNESCO (ITF-EFA). Admitted at the 6<sup>th</sup> ITF-EFA Dialogue Forum held in Kinshasa, DRC; November 26- 29, 2013.

As an important partner to the African Union Commission, ACDE was involved in the activities that led to the establishment of the Pan African Universities and the development of documents that led to the establishment of the Pan African E-University. Currently, *ACDE is hosting the CESA Sub-Cluster on Open, Distance and e-Learning.*

## **Technical Committees of ACDE**

### **Promoting Collaboration and Research**

The ACDE continues to play its role in fostering collaboration and research on ODeL and among ODeL institutions through its technical Committees.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the various technical committees starting with the ACDE Technical Committee on Collaboration, hosted by the Open University of Tanzania, Permit me also to acknowledge our key international partners, The Commonwealth of Learning under the leadership of Prof. Ashar Kanwar has been instrumental in capacity building, policy and quality Assurance. The Open University UK another key partner for research and evidenced based capacity building, The most recent being the being the Critical Digital Decision Research Project led by the OU UK, in collaboration with Laweh Open University, Kenyatta University, National Open University Nigeria and University of South Africa conducted.

We also like to acknowledge the Shanghai Open University for their Visiting Scholar Programme, where leading senior scholars from ACDE members institutions are selected to join others from around the world to share experiences and resources on ODeL, a programme I have benefited from myself.

I also like to acknowledge the ACDE Quality Assurance and Accreditation technical Committee led and hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria for their commitment to promoting quality Assurance in ODeL in Africa. In this respect

- a) Developed and validated the ACDE QA toolkit in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, UNESCO.
- b) Validated the Toolkit in collaboration with ODL International Reference Group
- c) Trained over 140 QA ToTs from 11 ACDE member institutions.

I also wish to acknowledge the Open University of Sudan for leading the Information Communication technology Committee and The University of South Africa for leading the Databases for ODL Committee, which hosted the journals and website in the past.

Permit me to ask for a minute silence in honour of two of the departed stalwarts of the ACDE who we lost in recent years Prof. Salvatore Mbwette of the Open University of Tanzania and Prof. Primerose Kurasha of the Open University of Zimbabwe. May their precious souls rest peacefully.

### **Going Forward,**

**The ACDE reaffirms its Vision to be the leading voice for the promotion and advocacy of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Africa and to entrench its mission to promote collaboration, research and quality assurance of ODL to enhance access to inclusive quality education and training in Africa with the SDG 4. This way we believe the ACDE continue be relevant and globally recognized.**

### **Strategies for Transitioning to Open, Distance and e-Learning**

#### **Future Plans**

In order to align with the current needs of society and emerging learning trends need to work with national government to provide the needed resources and environment for ODeL to thrive.

- i. Also work with policy makers to address both the perceive and actual challenges of ODeL by strengthening quality practices and reorientation.

- ii. Train more ACDE QA reviewers for member institutions
- iii. Develop capacity for ODL Quality Assurance in African universities and other ODL institutions.
- iv. Use the ACDE Quality Toolkit to establish the ACDE certification and accreditation programme to enhance quality of ODeL on the continent.
- v. Develop online QA resources repository for use by ODL institutions in Africa
- vi. Recognize personalities and institutions that have made great contribution to ODeL in the African Region and award them trophies in recognition of their contributions. We will be presenting the first strategic Leadership in education award to his Excellence Obasanjo former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and two others for their distinguished service to the ACDE

### **A call to Action**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,** Success in transitioning to e-learning requires a concerted effort and commitment from all stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

It will also require adoption and systematic use of the ACDE QA Toolkit to provide a comprehensive framework for quality Assurance.

Willingness of Vice Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors, Secretary General of the AAU and the All-African Students Union, will be a critical success factor.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, with these remarks I now declare the 6<sup>th</sup> ACDE Triennial Conference opened.

