

Leaders in Distance Education in the English-Speaking Caribbean

Olabisi Kuboni

Independent Consultant, Trinidad and Tobago

Introduction

In examining the provision of distance education in the English-speaking (Commonwealth) Caribbean, it must be acknowledged that, historically, the main providers have been external institutions: the University of London International Programmes and the City and Guilds of London Institute are two institutions that have performed that function dating back to the early 20th century. In more contemporary times, newer institutions have not only replicated that conventional model but have introduced different modalities for teaching from a distance. For example there are franchising arrangements with locally-based organisations as well as offshore schools (Marshall, et al, 2008).

Notwithstanding the continued presence of these external interests, there is an internally driven operation that has been evolving over the last seven decades that warrants attention. It is in this regard, that distance education in the University of the West Indies (UWI), and its predecessor, the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), needs to be acknowledged. More specifically, this paper will examine the activities of key individuals who have emerged as leaders in this area of educational provision within the institution.

Outreach through Extra-Mural Activity

In 1947, the UCWI was established in Jamaica as an affiliate of the University of London, with a single residential campus on that island. However, as its name implied, it was intended to serve the people of all the West Indian islands that were colonies of England. In that regard, it would function not only as a campus-based residential higher education institution but also as the base for reaching out to adults not attending the institution. This outreach function would be carried out through the College's Department of Extra-Mural Studies which was modelled on similar operations emerging out of higher education institutions in England. Like its antecedents, its role was to offer adult education to the wider population.

The activities of an Extra-Mural Department cannot really be considered as distance education. The separation of the teaching function from the learners to whom it is directed does not apply here. Nonetheless, its activities are included in this discussion for two reasons. First, while the teaching does not originate from the centre, there is a connection between the core institution and satellite units (University centres) set up to carry out that teaching function in the different islands across the Caribbean. The head of the Centre, known as the Resident Tutor, was responsible for the planning and implementation of the teaching programme locally. Secondly, this outreach operation would ultimately provide the foundation for the building of the more standard distance education operations in the ensuing years. It is therefore appropriate to start at this point.



Setting the Boundaries

There are two distinct features about the provision of distance education in the English-speaking Caribbean. First, it is confined to a single institution.ⁱ Secondly, its target population resides in a specific geo-political space, with special emphasis on the population residing in the countries without campuses, otherwise referred to as the non-campus countries (NCCs). Consequently, for the individuals who emerge as leaders in this context, their role is circumscribed by this reality; the activities that they engage in are either defined by the policy directives set out by the institution or are intended to shape those directives.

This paper therefore examines the contributions of individuals from the mid-twentieth century to the present, functioning in the various structures set up within the University of the West Indies to make educational opportunities available to adults residing in the chain of islands and mainland territory that constitute the English-speaking Caribbean.ⁱⁱ Those structures are:

- The Extra-Mural Department (later known as the School of Continuing Studies)
- The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Enterprise (UWIDITE)
- The University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC)
- The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC)

The paper will also look at the work of individuals belonging to the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) of the University of Guyana (UG).

The Extra-Mural Department/School of Continuing Studies

The setting up of the Extra-Mural Department (EMD) coincided with the launch of the University College itself. This department would satisfy three goals. First, it would introduce the element of adult education as an important dimension of the work of the College, following on the British higher education tradition. Secondly, it would pay special attention to its role as a regional organisation. According to Fergus, Bernard and Soares (2007), it was “the unit dedicated to bringing the University College to its scattered constituents who could not come to it.” In that regard, this unit would “provide adult education in a systematic way to all classes and conditions of persons across the region” (pp. 1-2). Thirdly, it would serve as a vehicle for ‘nation-building’, that is the building of the West Indian nation. Sir Phillip Sherlock, its first director, is credited with infusing this spirit of ‘West Indianness’ into its work. He is recorded as saying that, in an emergent nation, one of the important tasks of adult education was to sustain the spirit of patriotism (Gordon, 1979/80, p. 55).

We examine the contributions of the last two of the department’s directors.

Directors

Emeritus Vice Chancellor Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford (1967 – 1996) and Emeritus Professor Lawrence Carrington (1996 – 2007) were the last two directors. Along with Sir Phillip Sherlock (1947 – 1958), they were the longest serving of the nine.

Emeritus Vice Chancellor Professor the Hon. Rex Nettleford

Prior to taking up the position of Director, Rex Nettleford was Resident Tutor in two countries beginning in 1956 (Soares, 2011). He therefore had a long association with the department. His main

contribution during that extended period was in the public articulation of his strongly held views about the role and function of the Department both within the University and in the wider community. Three are presented here: nation-building; the tyranny of distance; and the role of Resident Tutors.

He would constantly reinforce the position established by the earlier pioneers about the commitment of the Department to nation building. Indeed, in the face of the collapse of the West Indian Federation in 1962, Nettleford's position was that "the task is still to educate for nationhood" (Nettleford, cited in Gordon, 1979/80, p. 52).

Another issue that constantly occupied his mind was what he referred to as "the tyranny of distance". He was very conscious that the Department was spread across several islands. The task at hand therefore was to identify the most effective tools (or weapons) to confront this challenge. Referring to the University as a whole, he laid out the task in this way:

The vision of the University as an instrument of growth and an institution of development is itself a challenge to the tyranny of distance; and the urgent search over the past two decades to find appropriate weapons of struggle and modalities of action to defeat the tyranny of distance ... is partly what has been driving the University to relevance and greater usefulness ... (Nettleford, cited in Jayawardena, 2002, p. 5).

In a retrospective piece, built on the theme *engaging the tyranny of distance*, he hailed the name change from Extra-Mural Department to the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) as a 'significant milestone' in part because, "it broke down the 'wall' between internal and external programmes and staff of the University" (Nettleford in Fergus et al., 2007, pp. 248-49).

In more specific terms, he highlighted the capacity of the Department/School to generate weapons to defeat the tyranny of distance in four areas of outreach. These four, which he referred to as 'pillars of action', were:

- The Social Welfare Training Centre, (SWTC)
- The Radio Education Unit
- The Trade Union Education Institute
- The Creative Arts Centre

All four spawned other initiatives that, in many instances, extended beyond the territorial borders of their origin into other parts of the region and at times even further afield. As far as Nettleford was concerned, these outreach units served as effective weapons in the fight against the tyranny of distance (Nettleford in Fergus et al., 2007, pp. 248-49).

A third area was his unwavering defence of the significance of the work that Resident Tutors (RTs) and other staff did. To many of them his public articulation of their worth was important, given the perception that they were not on par with staff within the campus walls. He referred to the RTs as "intellectual guerillas' engaged not in pitched battles on manicured fields of combat but in reconnoitring the untamed terrain of a rugged and underdeveloped landscape" (Nettleford, cited in Soares, 2011, p. 83). The veiled contempt for the on-campus academic in those remarks would not have gone unnoticed by his own staff.

Emeritus Professor Lawrence Carrington

When Professor Carrington became Director, the EMD had already been renamed the School of Continuing Studies (SCS). Almost immediately after assuming office, he initiated a plan to expand and heighten the impact of the School's outreach thrust within the non-campus countries (NCCs), as a means, no doubt, to redress the imbalance between them and the campus countries. The overall aim of the plan was to broaden the scope of public education within each of these countries to the benefit of their respective citizens who were not able to access education within the walls of the University. In this regard, in 1999-2000, the School launched two programmes – the Country Conference Series and the Scholars and Artists Project.

The stated objectives of the Conference Series were, *inter alia*, to increase research on matters of relevance to non-campus countries; and enhance the quality of public discourse on matters relevant to local development. The series sought to attract presenters not only from the host country but from the wider UWI community as well as from other institutions. The theme for each conference generally mirrored issues and concerns relevant to the host country. Over time, the responsibility for hosting the conferences was gradually taken over by the in-country staff. (School of Continuing Studies Handbook, 2002-2003).

The Sir Phillip Sherlock Programme for Scholars and Artists in Residence in Non-Campus Countries, named in honour of the first Director, was set up to afford residents of the NCCs the opportunity of interacting with prominent scholars and artists from throughout the region. Some of the goals of the programme were to,

- Provide residents, students, artists and scholars in non-campus countries with access to mentors, counterparts and possible collaborators who would not otherwise be readily available to them.
- Stimulate intellectual, creative and artistic activity in non-campus countries.

These Caribbean professionals, with expertise in fields such as carnival development, dance, writing, story-telling, art, poetry, textiles and fabric art, and ethnic studies, spent short periods with selected groups in the host country. (School of Continuing Studies Handbook, 2002-2003)

This intervention from the level of the Director was significant in that, even as it sought to enhance the scope and quality of public education within the respective countries, it was able to achieve this objective without significantly alienating the in-country leadership. Rather, it would appear that the Resident Tutors embraced and adopted the new initiatives.

A few years into his tenure as Director, Professor Carrington also assumed the role of Pro Vice Chancellor and Chair of the Board for Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education (BNCCDE). We will discuss the role of this Board later.

University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Enterprise (UWIDITE)ⁱⁱⁱ

When UWIDITE came on stream, the final 'E' in the acronym represented 'Experiment' as its creators, with the support of external funding bodies, spent time assessing its feasibility as a distance education vehicle for the University. When the experiment was deemed successful, there was a change to 'Enterprise'.

UWIDITE represented a significant shift in the implementation of the University's outreach programme. While the existing Extra-Mural/SCS model used local resources to "bring the University to the people", the UWIDITE approach was based on the principle that the expertise of qualified professionals should be made available to the entire Caribbean community.

This shift in thinking was influenced in no small measure by the emergence of audioconferencing technology that allowed the knowledge of a single subject matter specialist to be made available to a wide audience across the region. In addition, the interactive capability of the technology was an added feature that could enhance the quality of the teaching-learning exchange.

UWIDITE, which originated from the Mona, Jamaica campus, was able to draw on the resources of the two other campuses as well as Extra-Mural/SCS centres in the NCCs for ground level support. In the case of the latter, the Resident Tutor and the Centre staff played an important intermediary role between the Mona-based coordinators and the students/clients in the respective countries.

The UWIDITE project was formally launched in 1982. Overall leadership for its implementation lay primarily in the hands of a project director and two project officers, based at Mona.

The Project Director – Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Gerald C. Lalor

Pro Vice Chancellor Lalor was the primary driving force behind the decision to install an audioconferencing system to facilitate distance teaching in the University. In 1978, he spearheaded a two-month preliminary investigation to determine whether a telecommunications system could be of any benefit to the regional institution. On the basis of that initial undertaking, he sought, and was able to obtain, funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to conduct a more thorough study to assess the usefulness of a University telecommunications network for education, outreach and public service.

That study, the Caribbean Regional Communications Study (CARCOST), entailed members of staff of the University observing other distance teaching projects and conducting small scale studies to identify the Caribbean issues that could best benefit from the deployment of the technology. PVC Lalor sought and received the support of regional governments, in particular, Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Health, as well as regional professional bodies. He recognised the importance of not restricting the use of the technology to conventional university offerings but to expand its use to incorporate professional development and public education programmes, drawing on expertise outside of the walls of the university.

The overall conclusion of the CARCOST Report was that, given the nature of the problems confronting the region, one could not rely on 'conventional methods' to address them. Against that background, the Report suggested that "the appropriate use of telecommunications, coupled with the willingness of the countries to share, so that needs could be aggregated and met in a more economical manner, might be the way forward".

In May 1982, after much deliberation within the University and with USAID, the decision was taken to adopt the recommendations of the CARCOST Report and put the project on a firmer footing within the University, hence, the change from 'Experiment' to 'Enterprise'. An agreement was signed with USAID for a grant to cover salaries and the cost of some equipment for a three-year period. PVC

Lalor was also able to negotiate funding from the European Development Fund, the Commonwealth Foundation, as well as the governments of St. Lucia and Dominica.

Some are of the view that UWIDITE coming on stream was due in no small measure to the vision of PVC Lalor and his commitment to overcoming hurdles at every juncture.

The Project Officers – Ms. (now Dr.) Christine Marrett and Ms. Vilma Mc Clenan

The task of actually implementing the project was the responsibility of the two project officers, Dr. Christine Marrett and Ms. Vilma Mc Clenan. The multi-dimensional nature of this undertaking should not be understated. Audio-conferencing was an innovation both in terms of its hardware and software and also in terms of the nature of the interpersonal exchange that it supported. For persons used to the didactic exchanges in the conventional classroom setting, this would have been a novel experience. Dr. Marrett and Ms. Mc Clenan were therefore change agents seeking to alter the attitudes and behaviours of the new users of the technology. This group comprised administrative/technical support staff at the local centres, subject matter specialists and students. The project officers also had to interact with the telecommunications providers in the respective countries.

As noted earlier, the UWIDITE project facilitated programmes that originated both internally and externally to the University. With regard to the former, it assumed responsibility for the Challenge Examination Scheme. This Scheme was started in 1978 by the Faculty of Social Sciences to provide a route for residents of the NCCs to pursue the first part of a degree programme without having to relocate to a campus country. The faculty provided these individuals with a syllabus, booklists and access to libraries at the Extra-Mural centre in their country but no tuition. Basically these individuals were 'challenged' to study on their own and sit the relevant examinations without direct support from the University.

Under the leadership of the project officers, UWIDITE enhanced the initiative by including a teaching component via audioconferencing. The unit had now assumed the responsibility for retaining and supporting teaching staff from the three campuses and managing the conduct of examinations across all NCC centres.

In addition to the courses in the Challenge programme, other UWIDITE offerings were the first year of the Bachelor of Law degree as well as the Certificate in Public Administration and the Certificate in Education.

Managing the delivery of these courses also entailed persuading the teaching staff to adjust their teaching styles to take advantage of the interactive features of the technology. Even more challenging were their efforts to convince the staff of the need to develop supplementary print materials for their students. Notwithstanding some resistance, Dr. Marrett and Ms. Mc Clenan were able to negotiate terms and conditions with the lecturers to get them to agree to undertake this additional activity.

UWIDITE also mounted professional development programmes for specific special interest groups. For example, at the request of the Commonwealth Association of Science, Mathematics and Technology Educators (CASTME), the unit mounted a programme to train Science Technicians. The programme, which had the support of the Commonwealth Foundation, was developed and coordinated by Ms. Mc Clenan.

No doubt as a result of her work in the University, Ms. Mc Clenan served as President of the Jamaican Association of Open and Distance Learning (JADOL) during the period 2005-2008. It was under her presidency that JADOL was co-organiser, with UWIDEC, of the fourth Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF4) held in Jamaica in 2006. She is also a founding member of the Caribbean Association of Distance and Open Learning (CARADOL).

University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC)

Notwithstanding the strides made with UWIDITE, it was clear that the UWI was still a long way from meeting the needs of prospective students unable to enrol in one of the three physical campuses. Consequently, as outlined in its 1997-2002 Strategic Plan, the University set about to “enlarge, and put on a systematic basis, its programmes of Distance Education, in order to widen the catchment area for students ...” (p. 3).

To this end, the Plan stated that both the print and electronic media would be used for instruction as a means of increasing student enrolment in the distance mode. The Plan further emphasized that the academic content of the programmes to be delivered “will be under the firm control of the Faculties so that there will be no deviation from the high academic standards” of the UWI. (pp. 21-22).

The position taken by the University in its 1997 - 2002 Strategic Plan was no doubt influenced by the recommendation of the team appointed by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) some five years earlier to examine the possibilities of introducing distance education into the UWI. That team recommended that the University should transform itself from a single to a dual-mode institution, offering its programmes to both on-campus and distance students. In coming to a decision about how the dual-mode institution should be organised, Renwick, Shale and Rao (1992) had given some thought to the establishment of a campus-based open college “whose teaching responsibilities would be directed solely to the University’s distance students”. They did not follow through on that idea and concluded that “the right policy for UWI as a dual mode University will be to conceive, organise and manage its policies for distance education so that they are a regular part of the work of each teaching faculty assisted by a Centre for Distance Education, by the University centres in the non-campus countries, and by part-time tutors of off-campus students.” (p. 35)

It is against this background that UWIDEC was set up in 1997. The contributions of its three directors are highlighted here: Dr. Claudia Harvey (1996-1997), Professor Badri N. Koul (1998-2003) and Professor Stewart Marshall (2004-2007). Also highlighted is the overarching role of the Board of Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education (BNCCDE) to which UWIDEC, along with two other outreach units had a direct reporting relationship.

Dr. Claudia Harvey

Dr. Harvey assumed office as Director of UWIDEC in 1996, one year ahead of its launch date. Since the University was transitioning into a dual mode institution, Dr Harvey was acutely aware that UWIDEC could only carry out its core functions in conjunction with other agencies and individuals within the wider institution. A large part of her role therefore entailed managing (and even massaging) the relationships between UWIDEC and other stakeholders both internally and external to the institution.

In some instances that task involved facilitating a working relationship, to ensure that intended outcomes were achieved. In other cases, it was to build understanding and goodwill among managers to ensure that they facilitated and did not hinder academic staff participation in distance education related activity. In yet other cases, it was to ensure that senior management was kept abreast of the Centre's operations, and that it was aware of how existing policy directives were being implemented. In cases where there was no policy, or where it was weak, she would need to approach management for advice on how to proceed in a given situation.

A key set of stakeholders that as Director she had to persuade to participate were members of academic staff and, in particular, those required to serve as course developers. These lecturers were required to work with curriculum development specialists of UWIDEC to develop materials for the respective courses. She had to overcome their scepticism about this different approach to teaching and learning and their fears that the process of materials development 'mechanizes knowledge', that distance education itself does not allow for the "contestation of ideas and the engagement with different world views". Reflecting on those concerns, Harvey and her co-author wrote:

Firstly, the inevitable expansion in student numbers had already diluted the unique student- academic staff relationship ... Secondly, international trends in tertiary education illustrate that frequently 'packaging', by paying closer attention to student needs and other curricular issues, results in an improved way of imparting knowledge. ... Thirdly, the process of joint course planning and peer review of curriculum materials presents the opportunity to assure quality in the determination and maintenance of standards. (Harvey & Williams, 1996, p. 23)

Dr. Harvey's approach to engaging with management is also to be noted. Aware of how management's actions or non-actions could impact day-to-day operations, she ensured that all matters requiring attention were clearly articulated, that the history of action already taken on these matters was spelt out and that the 'next-steps' to be undertaken and by whom were specified. This approach was very evident in the way she dealt with what she referred to as the five critical issues for early resolution. These were payment to faculty (academic staff) for work done in distance education; copyright for distance education materials; financing distance education; student fees; and videoconferencing. As she herself pointed out, "determining policy at the UWI is at best a complex matter requiring decisions from various bodies. The final decision maker is not always clear...". (Final Report, July 1997).

Dr. Harvey's concern for building bridges did not only apply to relationships between UWIDEC and partners in the wider institution. Within the newly formed organisation itself, there was what she referred to as the 'old pioneers' and the 'new pioneers', the former transitioning from UWIDITE and the latter recent appointees, in particular curriculum development specialists. In the quest for internal cohesiveness, she mounted "a series of strategic planning and team building exercises, intended to have both groups forge the same mission ..." (Harvey & Williams, 1996, p. 22).

Professor Badri N. Koul

Professor Koul inherited all the issues that were evident during Dr. Harvey's tenure. The adjustments needed to accommodate the newly introduced distance programme within the long-standing face-to-face modalities of the three fairly autonomous physical campuses were still not

done. For example, no adjustments were made by the three campuses in their registration procedures to accommodate the registration of distance students. There was no clear effort to address the reluctance of academic staff to assume the added responsibility for the development and delivery of distance courses.

Later he was to describe the UWIDEC operations as 'crisis management'. Not convinced that the University administration was going to address any of the matters affecting the management of UWIDEC, he laid out his ideas on the way forward in two papers, the first the *New Management of Distance Education Centre/Operations* (May, 2001) and the second, *The New Management for UWIDEC: governance, budget and implementation schedule* (June, 2002). Some of the proposals were:

- The establishment of a separate registry for handling admissions, registration and examinations issues for the university's distance students
- The creation of a Board of Studies (later renamed Academic Programmes Committee) through which matters related to the development and delivery of distance programmes could be addressed.
- The appointment of a Programme Coordinator for each distance programme.

In addition to these higher level proposals, Prof. Koul also made interventions aimed at improving the day-to-day operations of the various UWIDEC subunits. During his tenure, a large portion of the courses for the programmes on offer were developed. Many of his interventions were therefore directed to the development/delivery aspect of UWIDEC's work. For example, he introduced the practice of randomly surveying courses at the end of delivery, assigning that task to the research officer. Increased focus was also placed on the review of course materials by other content specialists in a given discipline.

One important aspect of his contribution in the development/delivery area were the guidelines provided to transition thinking away from the notion of contact hours linked to a three-credit course, as understood in the face-to-face context, to study time for a distance context. Thus, completion of a three-credit undergraduate distance course required 100 study hours over a semester, divided among time spent studying the course materials inclusive of doing self-assessment exercises, tutorial time and teleconferencing. Main assignments and examinations were not included.

In 2004, Prof. Koul was conferred the title of Honorary Fellow of COL in recognition of his contribution to open and distance learning.

Professor Stewart Marshall

Professor Stewart Marshall was appointed the third UWIDEC Director in 2004. He assumed office at a time when the University's senior management was becoming more vocal in its dissatisfaction with UWIDEC's performance in the first five years of its existence. In the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan, distance education was identified as one of the "several discernible weaknesses that, if left unheeded, would seriously impair competitiveness and effectiveness". Specifically, the Plan noted that the University's distance education programmes "are not efficient and competitive" (p. 20). Consequently, one of the nine strategic objectives to be attained was the "restructuring of distance education and deepening the impact of outreach programmes in the NCCs" (p. 24). Three of the specific initiatives emerging from that objective were to:

- Ensure that the University's distance education programmes are responsive, learner-centred and cost-effective.
- Implement a shift to asynchronous delivery of distance education programmes.
- Adopt web-based delivery of programmes as the preferred mode of delivery of these programmes. (p. 31)

Professor Marshall came in with a mandate to effect major changes in order to improve the standard of UWIDEC's offerings. In a background paper laying out his approach to the task, he asserted that the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) offered the University the best possible route for attaining long-term sustainability in its distance education undertaking. (Marshall, n.d.).

Against that background, in 2004, he launched UWIDEC's Blended Learning/Asynchronous Delivery Project, assuming the role of Project Director and appointing a Project Coordinator to manage its implementation. The overall goal was to introduce a delivery mode that was both scaleable and flexible, capable of accommodating groups ranging from 40 to 400. It would also allow students to study anytime and anywhere, employing any mixture of modes. According to Professor Marshall, one important advantage of the new approach was that it would significantly reduce the reliance on face-to-face tutorials and audio-conferencing. Moodle was adopted as the Learning Management System and the project would be based on a standard model of online teaching. It would make significant use of the ICTs, thereby shifting the teaching-learning transaction into the online space. (UWIDEC-APC, P. 4, October, 2004).

It should be noted however that preceding this major initiative, there was a smaller pilot project to introduce web-based technologies into the UWIDEC delivery mix (Kuboni, Thurab-Nkhosi & Chen, 2002) and in fact the Blended Learning/Asynchronous Project built on this earlier effort.

The new project was designed to meet some clear objectives, including to:

- Provide a structure to support student and tutor behaviour in the online environment.
- Bring greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in course delivery.
- Ensure that students acquire all necessary skills to function as online learners. (UWIDEC-APC, P. 11, May, 2006).

Professor Marshall successfully bid for the UWI to host the fourth Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF4) which was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in 2006. He served as co-Chair of the Forum along with Sir John Daniel of COL. During his tenure, he launched the *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)* and continues to be its Chief Editor. Finally, while serving as Director, he held the UNESCO Chair in Educational Technology at the UWI.

The Board of Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education (BNCCDE)

Earlier, we mentioned that Prof. Carrington assumed the chairmanship of the BNCCDE while also serving as Director of the SCS. As we examine the more recent contributions of key individuals in the development of distance education in UWI, the role and function of the BNCCDE need to be

highlighted. The BNCCDE was the vehicle responsible for monitoring the University's outreach work and specifically, managing the operations of the three outreach units, namely UWIDEC, the SCS and the Tertiary Level Institutions Unit (TLIU). Consequently, under the chairmanship of Prof. Carrington, it would play a lead role in the discussion and debate surrounding the proposed changes to UWIDEC operations, as outlined in the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan. Eventually these discussions would lead to the creation of a new vehicle for advancing the open and online agenda of the UWI, namely the Open Campus. Prof. Carrington therefore played a pivotal role in the setting up of the Open Campus.

The UWI Open Campus

The Open Campus started operations in 2008, subsuming the three outreach units mentioned above.^{iv} It became the fourth campus of the UWI. When it came on stream, the BNCCDE was dissolved. Three possible factors could be said to have influenced the decision to create the new vehicle.

In terms of the SCS, over the years there had been considerable discontent among staff members regarding the status of the department within the University and the perceived neglect of the NCCs. (Fergus et al., 2007). In fact, as far back as 1976, one Resident Tutor, in his presentation at an international conference, called for "an additional campus or cross-campus faculty – an Open Campus or Open Faculty" to "serve the non-campus territories as well as off-campus areas in the campus territories". (Ramesar, 1976, p. 20).

Secondly, there was the continued dissatisfaction with the performance of UWIDEC, in particular at the senior management level. As noted earlier, this dissatisfaction was clearly evident in the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan. At the same time, some held the view that the problems with UWIDEC's performance emanated from the conflicting proposals for the governance of the University, as contained in the 1994 Report of the Chancellor's Commission on Governance. Even as the Report recommended the setting up of a single distance education centre to implement the development and delivery of the University's distance programmes, it was making the case for the devolution of power from the University Centre to the individual campuses. (Harvey and Williams, 1996, p. 27).

An unpublished BNCCDE document describes the new structure in part as follows:

The Open Campus will have a physical presence in each contributing country ... The Campus will function as a network of real and virtual nodes to deliver education and training to anyone with access to Internet facilities. ...

The Open Campus will be headed by a Principal at the level of Pro-Vice Chancellor and governed by a Campus Council in keeping with the statutes and ordinances of the UWI, adjusted to accommodate its virtual component. ...

Students of the Open Campus will enjoy the same quality of instruction and receive the same qualifications as students in other parts of the University even though the nature of instructional practice might entail differences in the management of their scholarly experience. (BNCCDE – Work in progress, May, 2007)

Emerita Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald

Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald was the first Principal of the Open Campus. In addition to putting in place the systems required of a UWI campus, Professor Simmons-McDonald had to face

the challenge of merging the three outreach units into a single organisational entity. In the case of the SCS, what was being brought into the merger was not only the university centres in the respective countries but also a set of specialised units, covering such areas as child development, social welfare, trade unionism and women's issues. Following are two key areas of activity undertaken during her tenure.

Accreditation

Given the distributed nature of the campus, spread across 17 countries, the experience of seeking institutional accreditation was going to be different from that of the three physical campuses, each located in a single country. In the absence of a single accreditation body for the region, campus leadership had to get support for a mechanism to facilitate the process in light of the unique character of the Open Campus. In this regard, the Principal and her management team were able to get agreement for an arrangement whereby the campus would seek accreditation through the Barbados Accreditation Council only, with other bodies accepting the decision of the Barbados agency.

Following the accreditation exercise, in July 2013, the BAC awarded the Open Campus institutional accreditation for a period of six years.^v One year later, it received the Certificate of Mutual Recognition from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).

Financing

When the Open Campus was set up there was the general expectation that, unlike the other three, it would be self-financing. In the campus' 2012-2013 Annual Report, the Principal made the following sobering remarks:

The Open Campus would need an injection of funds over and above income generated from fees to achieve expected expansion and redevelopment objectives in all areas. (p. 6).

In light of this situation, a significant portion of Professor Simmons-McDonald's tenure as Principal was taken up in seeking funding from various agencies both regionally and internationally. Some of the successful efforts included a 2011 grant from the Jamaican agency, United Services Fund to upgrade the technological infrastructure of all local sites in that country. She was also able to obtain a soft loan from the Caribbean Development Bank for the upgrade of sites in St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The most significant of these efforts was the grant of 20 million dollars (Canadian) by the Department of Foreign Trade and Development (DFTAD) for a project to Strengthen Distance Education in the Caribbean (SDEC). (UWI Open Campus Annual Report, 2012-2013).

Professor Simmons-McDonald represented the Open Campus on the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) and was a member of the Standing Conference of Presidents. In 2014, she received an award for Outstanding Contribution to Education from the Global Distance Learning Congress.

Pioneers of the University of Guyana Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE)

British Guiana, being a part of the British West Indies, was one of the participating countries of the UCWI and its successor the UWI. However, in 1962, its government withdrew the mainland country as one of the supporting countries of the regional institution and set up the University of Guyana

(UG) in 1963. In 1976, UG set up an Extra-Mural Department within its Faculty of Education, with **Mr. Samuel Small** being appointed Coordinator. Grounded in the principles of adult education the EMD, under Mr. Small, set itself the goal of developing outreach programmes that were responsive to the stated needs of the population groupings it set out to serve. It therefore surveyed various interest groups and on the basis of the data gathered, developed the programmes to be offered.

In 1981, the EMD set about to establish centres throughout the country. The first to be set up in that year was the New Amsterdam Extra Mural Centre. Later there would be a second in Linden and another in Anna Regina. Eventually, there would be a physical presence of the department in all ten regions of the country. In a newspaper interview several years later, Mr. Small would note that one of his greatest achievements was to take university education into the communities to persons who could not travel to attend the institution at the Turkeyen campus. (Eleazar, 2011). What this meant was that educational opportunities were now available to the population of remote sections of the country, in the riverine areas and the hinterland.

In 1983, the EMD was expanded and renamed the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (IACE). Mr. Small became the Director, and **Ms. Lynette Anderson** Deputy Director. After further expansion and upgrade, the IACE became the Institute of Distance and Adult Education (IDCE) in 1996. This further expansion also established the IDCE as the distance education arm of the University and the University itself as “a dual-mixed mode institution”.^{vi} IDCE was expected to work in collaboration with the faculties, as well as government and non-government agencies.^{vii}

The institute’s major thrust into distance education occurred in 1992 when it launched its pre-university English course, first in Region 10 and in three other regions over the ensuing year (Mangar, 2009). The delivery mode combined self-instructional print materials with face-to-face tutorials. Over time, teleconferencing and audio cassettes were added to the mix. Anderson and two colleagues, in their assessment of the overall initiative, were open about the challenges that it entailed. Two are noted here.

First, they noted that efforts to introduce other media, like teleconferencing, were hampered by “a poor or non-existent communication infrastructure, including an unreliable electricity supply in remote areas”. There was also an absence of telephone links and a shortage of qualified personnel to produce audio cassettes.

A second major challenge was that of implementing an efficient learner support system in remote and not easily accessible areas of the country. They describe the scenario as follows:

Learners are scattered over vast forested areas, some accessible only by aircraft, where few qualified tutors may reside. Sharing of expertise is difficult even in cases in which only a few miles may have to be covered (Anderson, Marcus & Thomas, 2000).

The fact that IACE and subsequently the IDCE were able to implement a distance programme under those conditions speaks to a large extent to the quality of the leadership provided by the Director and Deputy Director during that period.

Also of interest is the way the organisation is still able to maintain focus on the two principles underpinning its approach to programming from its inception. While the range of programmes offered has widened, two types have persisted: the IDCE still offers remedial courses (Basic English

and Basic Mathematics) as well as courses geared towards meeting the stated needs of specific population groupings, a key goal of the EMD under Mr. Small. Current programmes in this category that are still offered are the Certificate course in Workplace Health and Safety, Industrial Hygiene and Care for the Elderly.^{viii}

It is to be noted that the IDCE continues to function as an arm of a dual-mode institution, working with staff of other sectors of the university.

In closing

In outlining the contributions of these leaders, there was no intention to critique or to ascribe notions of success and/or failure to any of the activities or proposals described. Rather, the aim was to highlight the efforts of these individuals in advancing distance education in the English-speaking Caribbean.

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Author:

Dr. Olabisi Kuboni is an Independent Consultant in open, distance and online learning based in Trinidad and Tobago. She retired as Senior Lecturer and Head of Graduate Programmes at the University of West Indies, Open Campus in 2012. Dr Kuboni is a recipient of COL Fellow Award in 2013.

ⁱ The institution now comprises three physical campuses. In addition to Mona, Jamaica, there is one in St. Augustine, Trinidad and a third in Cave Hill, Barbados.

ⁱⁱ There are currently 17 contributing countries of the UWI. They are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos.

ⁱⁱⁱ Most of the material for this segment was obtained from the UWIDITE Report compiled by PVC Lalor and Dr. Marrett.

^{iv} The TLIU, renamed the Office of External Relations, Inter- and Intra-Institutional Collaboration (ERIIC), was subsequently removed from the Open Campus.

^v <http://www.open.uwi.edu/accreditation>

^{vi} <http://idce.uog.edu.gy/>

^{vii} [http://wikieducator.org/Institute_of_Distance_and_Continuing_Education, University_of_Guyana](http://wikieducator.org/Institute_of_Distance_and_Continuing_Education,University_of_Guyana)

^{viii} <http://idce.uog.edu.gy/>