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STRATEGIC PLAN
2021 - 2025

DECEMBER 2021
PREFACE

On behalf of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), I wish to take this opportunity to introduce you to the ACDE Strategic Plan (SP) for 2021-2025 which aims to facilitate the mission of “promoting collaboration amongst actors in ODeL, advocate for policy, research and quality assurance in open and distance learning with the aim of increasing access to inclusive equitable quality education and training in Africa.” Operationalization of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan will be through implementation of earmarked strategic projects/programmes.

The Strategic Plan builds on and consolidates the achievements made by the African Council for Distance Education over the last five-years 2016-2020. It is designed to transform the Council “To be a major player in the promotion of and advocacy for Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) in Africa.”

The African Council for Distance Education will continue working closely with its various stakeholders existing and potential member institutions, African governments, regional institutions, development partners, the private sector and the general public.

I wish to express gratitude to the ACDE member institutions and individuals, African governments, regional institutions, development partners, the private sector and all friends and well-wishers of ACDE for the past and current support. It is my sincere hope that this support will continue in order to make remarkable impact through implementation of this Strategic Plan.

Prof. Goski Alabi
President, ACDE Executive Board
September 2021
ABBREVIATIONS
ACDE   African Council for Distance
AfDB   African Development Bank
COL    Commonwealth of Learning
EAC    East African Community
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States
ICDE   International Council for Distance Education
ICT    Information and Communication Technologies
IGAD   Intergovernmental Authority on Development
MOOCs  Massive Open Online Courses
NGO    Non-Governmental Organization
NOUN   National Open University of Nigeria
ODeL   Open, Distance and e-Learning
ODL    Open and Distance Learning
OER    Open Educational Resources
OU UK  Open University of United Kingdom
QA     Quality Assurance
QAAA   Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency
SADC   Southern African Development Community
SP     Strategic Plan
TESSA  Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa
UNESCO United Nations Education Scientific Organization
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1. INTRODUCTION

The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) is a continental educational network comprising African universities and other higher institutions of learning, 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 non-profit making organization, and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

The idea of the ACDE establishment was motivated by the desire of African Vice Chancellors to establish a unifying body that would facilitate and promote the pooling of resources, the shaping and influencing of continental policies on distance education, and collectively sourcing for and tapping into resources available from the national, regional and the international communities for the advancement of education and training through ODL.

This Strategic Plan (SP) for the period 2021 – 2025 has developed a clear statement of the Council's vision and mission, specified set of strategic objectives and formulated key strategies and projects that address those factors that are essential to the organisation's success.

The plan succeeds the strategic plan for 2016-2020 and has been prepared through an in-depth consultative process, designed to align the Council’s activities with the aspirations of key stakeholders in the African Region.

2. ACDE VISION, MISSION AND CORE FUNCTIONS

The ACDE’s strategic future direction is encapsulated in its statements of vision, mission, core functions and core values:

**Vision**
To be a major player in the promotion of and advocacy for Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) in Africa.

**Mission**
To promote collaboration amongst actors in ODeL, advocate for policy, research and quality assurance in open and distance e-learning with the aim of increasing access to inclusive equitable quality education and training in Africa

**Core Values**
The ACDE is guided by the following core values: Transparency; Accountability; Integrity/Ethics; Collaboration; Equity; Responsiveness; Innovativeness; Results-oriented; Sustainability; Reliability; and Efficiency.

**Core Functions**
- a) To promote quality in open and distance learning including e-Learning, flexible and lifelong learning in Africa.
- b) To promote research and training in open and distance e-learning in Africa.
- c) To contribute to the development of policies essential to the advancement of open and distance e-learning.
d) To foster continental and global collaboration in open and distance e-learning.

e) To provide a forum where individuals, organizations and governments can interact, deliberate on policy matters, share and disseminate ideas on and innovations in open and distance e-learning.

f) To promote the development of appropriate methods, human capacities and technologies in education and training relevant to open and distance e-learning.

3. STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

To develop this strategic plan, a situation analysis of ACDE was undertaken by a committee that was constituted by the ACDE Executive Board in November 2020 with representation from ten ACDE Member Institutions. The committee participated in the review of the 2016-2020 SP and development of the 2021-2025 SP.

Through the situation analysis of ACDE programmes and activities, the committee came up with a score card of achievements based on four thematic areas namely: Our people (learning and growth); Clients/stakeholders/services/brand; internal systems and processes and financial sustainability as indicated in table 1. The committee further identified challenges that were experienced in implementing the ACDE 2016-2020 strategic plan. In addition, the committee identified opportunities that can be utilized in the 2021-2025 ACDE strategic plan.

3.1 Achievements

Table 1: 2016-2020 Achievements score card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Our People: Growth and Development</th>
<th>2. Our stakeholders: Promotions and advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the last strategic period ACDE had:</td>
<td>• Collaborations in teacher educator capacity building (TESSA, OU UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 programme directors in 4 member universities (a) Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency, hosted by National Open University of Nigeria, (b) Technical Committee on Collaboration and Partnership, hosted by Open University of Tanzania, (c) Database, hosted by University of South Africa and (d) Information and Communication Technology, hosted by Open University of Sudan)</td>
<td>• Collaboration with COL on capacity development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Secretariat comprising of seconded staff by NOUN &amp; Egerton Universities including: Executive Director, Administrative Finance Officer, and Administrative Secretary</td>
<td>• ICDE, CoL, UNESCO, AfDB, Master Card Foundation, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and EAC. A link was established with regional and national ODeL Associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Internal systems and processes</th>
<th>4. Financial sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Held 5th ACDE Conference and General Assembly successfully</td>
<td>• Generated USD 292360 from membership subscription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Challenges Experienced in Implementing the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan

The following challenges were identified as a hindrance in implementing the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan:

a. Lack of consistent subscription from ACDE members. While 58 member institutions were registered with ACDE, only 29 were active. However, the financial sustainability of the council was carried by only 15 member institutions who were subscribing consistently.

b. Most institutions were not reached for training in the use of the ACDE-QA tool kit due to lack of funding.

c. Lack of information on on-going ODL projects on the African continent that result in wasteful duplication.

d. Unavailability of and limited access to reliable, transparent and up-to-date information and data on ODL in Africa.

e. Lack of research activities.

f. ICT matters were not adequately covered under key results areas and strategic issues in the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. Different universities have different ICT platforms, so creating one for all universities to use was not possible.

3.3 Opportunities

The opportunities identified include:

a) Conduct surveys to:
   - Assess the impact of the QA tool kit in institutions that have adopted the use of the ACDE-QA toolkit. Collaborate with National QA Agencies to incorporate ACDE-QA toolkit in their evaluation instruments.
   - Review of the ACDE-QA tool kit to accommodate e-Learning.
   - Determine levels of collaboration among partner institutions.
   - Activate dormant partnerships through consultative meetings.

b) Encourage ACDE member institutions to forge more collaborations and partnerships in areas of ICT, QA, training, research, OER and MOOCs.

c) Encourage Regional Representatives to recruit new members and report progress on the link created between ACDE and their regions.

d) Design and develop open and online capacity development programmes.
e) Engage in continental higher education policy issues in ODeL
f) Publish conference proceedings Develop collaborative activities with regional ODeL bodies.
g) Encourage member institutions to report status of implementing ODeL programmes.
h) Development of a framework for collaboration and partnership between and among the ACDE network of institutions and partners.
i) Development and maintenance of a functional, interactive and dynamic continental ODeL Database. Explore the possibility of using social media to enhance visibility of ACDE to facilitate information sharing amongst stakeholders.
j) Resuscitate the ACDE ODL research agenda, encourage member institutions to make voluntary contributions, Source funding from donors, create partnerships with publishing houses.

4. THE 2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Table 2 presents the 2021-2025 balanced score card, showing what ACDE seeks to achieve in the next five years.

Table 2: 2021-2025 Balance Score Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Our People: Growth and Development</th>
<th>2. Our stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the number of active ACDE members subscribing regularly from 15 to 30</td>
<td>• Increase number of collaborations that are active to 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have a functional secretariat with seconded members of staff from ACDE Member institutions including (Executive Director, Finance Officer, Administrative Officer, Senior Administrative Officer</td>
<td>• Undertake 10 capacity building workshops for ACDE members, targeting 2 workshops per year focusing on open, Distance and e-learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have student interns to support ACDE secretariat</td>
<td>• Have functional collaboration with 20 stakeholders in ODeL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have research fellows to support ACDE Secretariat</td>
<td>• Develop a newsletter biannually updating ACDE members on the ACDE activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Internal systems and processes</th>
<th>4. Financial sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hold the 6th and 7th ACDE General conference</td>
<td>• Increase membership subscription to USD 500000 in the current strategic period by 2025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Audit the ACDE accounts and processes annually and publish the reports on our website
• Sign collaborative MOUs with partners
• Train 200 QA officers from 20 ACDE Member institutions
• Accredit 20 ACDE Member institutions that use and comply to the ACDE QA standards
• Publish ACDE reports annually

• Develop at least 3 funding research proposals per year with a target of winning one.
• Encourage and increase the number of ACDE member institutions supporting ACDE activities from 4 to 15

5. OPERATIONAL ACTION PLAN

5.1 Our People: Growth and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicator(s)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To double the number of active ACDE members from 15 to 30 by 2025</td>
<td>Register of ACDE Members</td>
<td>Develop, a recruitment framework Upscale the recruitment of members</td>
<td>ACDE secretariat</td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022 2023 2024 2025</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undertake strategic recruitment to fill staffing gaps at ACDE Secretariat preferably by way of secondment,</td>
<td>ACDE Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5.2 Our stakeholders

**Goal:** To increase ACDE visibility within ODeL stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicator(s)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To keep our stakeholders informed of ACDE activities</td>
<td>ACDE annual reports published annually on the ACDE website</td>
<td>Develop and Share annual reports as well as newsletters</td>
<td>ACDE secretariat</td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase ACDE presence on social media</td>
<td>Posted regular activities on social media.</td>
<td>Create and/or maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts, WhatsApp</td>
<td>ACDE secretariat,</td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Cost** 7500

5.3 Internal systems and processes

**Goal:** To develop ACDE’s internal processes to optimal functionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Action/Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hold the 7th ACDE Conference 2024 targeting 300 participants</td>
<td>Conference reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conference reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up conference planning committee by the end of 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secretariat to initiate; planning committee to execute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold ACDE virtual Conferences after every two years</td>
<td>Conference report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning for the conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold ACDE Annual Webinar/workshop annually</td>
<td>Webinar report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit the ACDE accounts and processes annually and make reports available for stakeholders</td>
<td>Audit report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publish audit report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACDE Secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACDE Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance collaboration with stakeholders in ODeL</td>
<td>Signed collaborative MOUs with partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train 200 QA officers in 20 ACDE member institutions</td>
<td>List 200 QA officers from 20 ACDE Member institutions trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List of certified trained QA officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing QA tool kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training QA Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACDE QAAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredit 20 ACDE Member institutions that use and comply to the ACDE quality standards</td>
<td>List of certified and accredited ACDE Institutions</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>4808 00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.4 Financial sustainability

**Goal:** Enhance our financial standing by 50% in the next five years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To increase revenue by doubling the number of active members</td>
<td>List of paid up members</td>
<td>Invoice members on time, and following up non-payment</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td></td>
<td>2021 2022 2023 2024 2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Records of annual subscription</td>
<td>Recruiting new members</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Membership annual subscriptions to raise USD 500000 in the current strategic period by 2025
2. Develop at least 2 funding proposals per year with a target of winning one.
3. Increase the number of ACDE member institutions supporting ACDE activities from 4 to 8

| Total Cost | 15000 |

### 6. SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The funding of the ACDE 2021-2025 will be obtained from the following sources as indicated:

- i. Membership annual subscriptions to raise USD 350000
- ii. Members in-kind donations and financing ACDE activities to raise USD 150000
- iii. Conference subscription fee USD 120000
- iv. Research funding proposal writing USD 15000
7. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

7.1 Introduction

Implementation of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan will require careful linking of targets with the budgetary processes of the Council. It will also require effective cascading of the objectives and targets into department, unit, individual officer and member institution objectives and targets.

Monitoring will require a process of continuously maintaining close observation and follow-up over the implementation of the activities in the Strategic Plan. This requires systematic collection of data according to the targets in the Strategic Plan and requisite activities defined in annual work plans and budgets.

Evaluation will assess the outcomes and impacts of the Strategic Plan and will entail annual self-evaluations and a major external evaluation to be conducted towards the end of the 5 years of the plan. The criteria for evaluation will be based on the strategic plan’s vision, objectives and other requirements ordered by the Council.

7.2 Implementation Plan

The following measures will be taken in order to ensure optimal implementation of the Strategic Plan:

- Full development of each project/programme into comprehensive and well prepared proposal;
- Mobilization of adequate funding for each project/programme— from both internal and external sources;
- Getting relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation as deemed necessary. Efforts will be taken to ensure that the plan is well understood by the stakeholders – especially the member institutions and potential funders;
- Taking steps to assign a responsible party for each key target in each approved project;
- Preparing annual work plans and budgets for implementation of the targets in each project in the Strategic Plan – as part of the annual budgeting exercise;
- Preparation and implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the Strategic Plan;
- Ensuring that the number and quality of human resources are adequately made in line with the demands of the activities in the Strategic Plan;
- Keeping staff and member institutions regularly engaged in all relevant activities.

7.3 Monitoring

Implementers of the targets within each project set in the Strategic Plan will provide quarterly progress reports to the ACDE Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer using a monitoring form to be designed and provided. These monitoring reports will then form the basis for annual strategic plan implementation progress report— to be discussed and approved by the Council. The guidelines for preparing, sharing and using the monitoring and other reports will be defined by the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.
7.4 Evaluation

Evaluation of the Strategic Plan will entail both internal and external evaluation. The internal or self-evaluation will be done – annually, using internal (Secretariat and member institutions’) staff. External evaluation will be done towards the end of the fifth year. Both evaluations will aim at:

- Assessing the achievements and failures of the Strategic Plan;
- Seeing whether adequate resources are being mobilized to implement the plan;
- Assessing the impact of the Strategic Plan;
- Accounting for usage of resources;

The Executive Director will prepare and issue terms of reference for both self-evaluation and external evaluations. The terms of reference will cover among others:

- Subject of evaluation;
- Study design; data collection procedures, sampling procedures, indicators to be used, basis for comparisons, etc.
- Time span to be covered.
- Profile of evaluators;
- Procedures for executing the evaluation;
- Analysis and reporting;
- Feedback of evaluation findings.

The criteria for selecting evaluators will consider relevant technical skills, evaluation skills and experience in similar assignments. The evaluators will also be responsible for providing feedback to Management.

7.5 Review of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan will be rolled forward every year based on the feedback received from quarterly and annual progress reports and evaluation reports. A major review of the plan will be undertaken after every five (5) years.
APPENDIX: 1
Organizational Structure of ACDE

Legend
SPO  Senior Programme Officer
PO   Programme Officer
PA   Programme Assistant
AD/SEC Administrative Secretary
FO   Finance Officer
AO   Administration Officer
QAAA Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency
TCC  Technical Committee on Collaboration