Learning support: cross-cutting curriculum experiences of remote distance learners from marginalised communities in Botswana

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Abstract
This studied explored experiences of remote learners from marginalised communities in Botswana using interviews and study of official documents. Three cross-cutting curriculum issues emerged: the language of instruction, the range of subjects offered and the learning materials. There was also tension between the national curriculum and distance learners’ aspirations that arose from the failure of the curriculum to address the needs of remote distance learners equitably. Firstly, remote distance learners from marginalised communities could not make connections with the curriculum as examples used were not from their environment. Secondly the range of subjects offered limit their aspirations as it does not enable them to attain careers in pure science related subjects nor in information and communication technology. The curriculum therefore excludes distance learners from participating in subjects that could enable them to be part of an information rich society of which Botswana’s Vision 2016 advocates. The curriculum offered tends to perpetuate the exclusion of learners from marginalised communities in terms of remaining outside the mainstream knowledge and information society that Botswana is striving to become. The curriculum therefore limits the opportunities for distance learners in competing for well-paid employment to low-paid jobs such as tuck-shop assistants, cleaners or herd boys. Policy implications for practice and recommendations are highlighted.

Introduction
Distance education in Botswana, was only effectively introduced after 1998 when the Distance Education Unit at the Department of Non-Formal Education was transformed into the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL). The transformation was necessitated by the desire to expand access to and improve the academic performance of distance learners through the provision of effective learning support systems. Although situated in Gaborone, the work of BOCODOL is decentralised through a network of five regional centres and 90 learning centres that are strategically located across the country. The Kang Regional Centre that I managed for six years is one of the five regional centres and is located in the western part of Botswana, an area inhabited by marginalised communities, mainly the Basarwa or San. Traditionally, students enrolled for modules offered via distance education have at least a fixed abode and a postal address. They may even have access to learning support through a telephone or by visiting a learning centre close to where they live. But, for example, how would Gcagae Xade - a descendant of the first people of the Kalahari Desert, living a nomadic lifestyle in a very remote area of Botswana - cope with the demands of learning at a distance? It is learners like Xade who captured my interest while I worked as a regional manager of Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), responsible for the provision of learning support in settlements that are both remote and underdeveloped. During 2003 and 2004, I encountered poor
academic performance and a low level of course completion by distance learners enrolled for Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE). This raised the question:

How do remote learners from marginalised communities experience the BGCSE curriculum delivered through open and distance learning?

In order to explore remote learners’ experiences qualitative methods were used as briefly highlighted in the following section.

Methodology
I used qualitative techniques. The use of qualitative methods is acceptable (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). The qualitative methods like interviews, journals and official documents provide depth necessary in understanding and interpreting learner experiences and helps in the triangulation when data are merged in order to use the results to understand the research problem (Creswell, 2005). I therefore studied of official documents, used journals and interview transcripts to arrive at three cross-cutting curriculum issues that answer the research question of this study.

Findings
The three cross-cutting curriculum issues emerged from my study of official documents, journals and interviews: the language of instruction, the range of subjects offered and the learning materials.

The language of instruction
The language of instruction is different from the language spoken by distance learner participants in this study as indicated in their biographical data (section 5.2.4). The RNPE recommends the development of a language policy to accommodate other languages spoken in Botswana including those of marginalised communities in order to promote the teaching of mother tongue at early phases of education. However, the policy implementation has not taken off yet in addressing the issues of mother tongue. The distance learner participants’ languages are as yet to be written. They therefore had no privilege of learning through their own language. English is used as a medium of instruction in all subjects except in teaching the Setswana language. Distance learners studying BGCSE are expected to have an adequate command of the English language, (BOCODOL, 2001; Hughes, 2004). A good grasp of English language can facilitate understanding. However for some remote distance learners the medium of instruction is a barrier to understanding the printed learning materials. Due to poor
understanding of the medium of instruction some learners like Thembi indicated during the interview that they had stopped studying.

Interviewer: Do you study in the morning, during the day or afternoon?
Thembi: I do not study and do not write.
Interviewer: Why don’t you study?
Thembi: Due to lack of understanding.
Interviewer: When do you study?
Thembi: I don’t study at all. (P2:9 98:115).

Understanding printed learning materials can assist learners to comprehend what they study. Without adequate understanding learners like Thembi are more likely to fail to complete assignments and are more likely to become inactive. The reasons for lack of understanding of learning materials was probably due to inadequate study skills. A study in India by Biswas (2001) shows that distance learners from disadvantaged backgrounds have inadequate learning skills for coping with their studies. Dropping out could be due to management failing to put in place mechanisms for detecting learners without adequate learning skills and providing programmes that could support such learners. In a study reported by Creed et al (2005), poor management at regional level was responsible for a 69% dropout rate in a distance education programme in Pakistan. Language appears to be another issue responsible for lack of understanding of the learning materials by distance learners from a predominantly oral tradition with limited reading culture and restricted access to libraries or reading materials. The typical prose-intensive style of print in distance learning materials makes heavy demands on learners who are often unpractised readers and writers in both their mother tongue and official language of instruction (Creed et al, 2005). BOCODOL learning materials are developed for selected subjects offered at a distance by part-time writers.

Range of subjects offered
The subjects offered to BOCODOL distance learners are based on the same curriculum offered in public conventional schools. The range of subjects offered in the curriculum however does not include the natural sciences namely chemistry, physics and biology nor information and communication technology or subjects that have a direct impact on their livelihoods as is the case in public conventional schools. The current subjects distance learners study includes human and social biology, Setswana, and history. These are subjects that are perceived to have low status compared to the pure sciences and this could have serious consequences for their future employment and training (Collins et al., 2000). Despite the unavailability of learning materials in natural science subjects learners at Kang took some science subjects privately.
The journal entry below by one participant shows that learners were prepared to pay tutors to help them with physics and chemistry privately.

For the Double Science students they have come up with a very good idea of contributing 3 US Dollar (P20) each so that they can hire a tutor from Matsha. This really shows some improvement on our learners. There will be hiring two tutors for Chemistry and Physics (6:20 45:48).

The initiative of engaging private tutors for chemistry and physics demonstrates commitment in their studies despite that the natural science subjects are not currently being offered. Learning materials in all the subjects offered were available.

The learning materials

The Learner Charter promises learners high quality and up-to-date materials, however the reality at the time of this study was that learning materials had not been reviewed since their publication in 2001. The learning materials were written by part-time writers who are teachers from conventional schools and live in or around Gaborone city. Learning materials are expected to be user friendly with support being embedded in them. Such support is meant to assist distance learners through their studies with fewer challenges. When learning materials are poorly designed distance learners are disadvantaged even more.

Inadequate support in the learning materials exacerbates the challenges faced by remote distance learners. The support challenges are further complicated by existence of errors in the learning materials. In order to advance learning, distance learners should be issued with error-free learning materials. Errors that have not been corrected in the learning materials that are the only source of reading for learners in remote settlements, contribute to poor understanding. When I joined the college the issue of errors in the learning materials was identified in 2002 and discussed at a tutor conference (Minutes for specific subject group meeting, 2002). An attempt to identify and document such errors was done with the help of tutors and submitted to the authorities responsible for learning material development and distribution. Another issue raised by tutors in the minutes is that some sections or topics are shallow. For example, the specific subject minutes (BOCODOL, 2002: 22) for the human and social biology (HSB) group recorded that the HSB material is not free of factual and technical errors. The document gives this information about HSB Unit 2:

The information about photosynthesis is shallow e.g., factors, which affect photosynthesis, should have been included. The starch test on the leaf, this could help those who left school a long time ago. The experimental information is vital for students.
When information is considered by subject experts to be shallow it means learners need extra learning materials if they are to perform well in the examination. Learners who have no access to libraries like those at Inalegolo, New Xade, and D'Kar are disadvantaged and may not easily satisfy the examination requirements in terms of high level thinking skills. The issue of errors in the learning materials is not new. A customer satisfaction survey conducted by Sebopelo and Ntuma (2005) in all BOCODOL regional centres also highlights tutors’ concern on the issue of errors in the learning materials when it says:

Fifty-seven percent of respondents say that the materials have a lot of typing errors, 64% of respondents agree that there is a lot of wrong information in the material and 75% say that the material does not provide detailed content.

The findings of the customer survey by Sebopelo and Ntuma (2005), confirms the challenge in learning material provision. Learning materials with errors compromise quality and mislead learners, because learners tend to believe that what is in print is correct and they learn from printed material without question particularly instructional learning materials that substitute a teacher. This explains the low academic performance attained by some distance learners. The failure to attend to the errors was also a major concern raised by tutors in their journals for example the following journal entry:

Ever since the College started, various tutors and other stakeholders have pointed out the corrections needed in the learner study materials. One wonders why up to now the materials have not been revised. No one knows the impact on the learners of study materials riddled with errors, both workbooks and assignments. (P10:52 259:262)

Some learners in remote areas, the only materials they interact with are their study books. As a result, the information in these books should be accurate and up to date, (P10:53 165:168).

The concern raised by the tutor above cannot be overemphasized. Learners like Amos as indicated previously in this section, get frustrated and find it easy to withdraw when learning materials are not user friendly. The findings of my study is a complete opposite of the findings by Ukpo (2006) on Nigerian students who perceived course learning materials to be clearly written and felt the modules were well written and easy to follow.

My examination of learning materials revealed a lack of presence of the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi issues in the English and Setswana study materials. I discussed this issue with two programme development co-ordinators. They confirmed that the learning materials had little or no aspects that the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi learners could relate to and that some sections and activities in the learning materials were not user-friendly and, as such, did not build on distance learners' existing
knowledge. By way of example, English Language Study Unit 1 has activities that do not give the distance learner from marginalised communities the opportunity to interact meaningfully with the learning materials. The activity on page 24, presupposes that the learner will have access to a library. Moreover, on page 31, the learner is asked to ‘go into a shop that sells magazines and newspapers.’ This is activity could not be done as distance learners from all the four sites live in areas where there are no such shops. The activity on page 37 is a passage entitled ‘Gospel Singer Thrills Audience’. The passage is about an event that took place at Boipuso Hall in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana, which distance learners at Inalegolo, New Xade and some at D'Kar and Kang have never been to Gaborone. On page 51, distance learners are asked to write about a busy market place, a sports stadium and a busy bus station early morning and on page 55, they are asked to write about an extravagant wedding and a dangerous journey on a motor cycle. None of these are known to remote distance learners and therefore present difficulties and hinder learning.

The Setswana learning materials are as out of tune as the English ones as they also focus more on the Setswana culture. The materials are not inclusive and are rather foreign to Basarwa and Bakgalagadi. Topics like Bogosi, Lenyalo, meila ya Setswana, are mainly about the main Setswana communities, Bakwena, Bakgatla, Bangwato and others. For Setswana literature, the books have settings in urban and mining areas. For instance, ‘botshelo teemane’ the setting is in Jwaneng Township and this is unfamiliar and foreign to many distance learners. Some tasks in Setswana involve translation from Setswana to English. This presents difficulties as their Setswana is already not that good. A distance learner from D'Kar would first translate the Setswana into his mother tongue and then to English and in the process fail to get equivalent terms and the whole translation loses meaning thus impacting negatively on learning.

Discussion and conclusions
Tension between national curriculum and distance learners’ aspirations arises from the failure of the current curriculum to address the needs of all communities equitably. Firstly, learners from marginalised communities cannot make connections with the curriculum as examples used are not from their environment. Secondly the range of subjects offered limit their aspirations as it does not enable them to attain careers in pure science related subjects nor in information and communication technology. The curriculum therefore excludes distance learners from participating in subjects that could enable them to be part of an information rich society of which the country’s Vision 2016 advocates. The curriculum offered tends to perpetuate the exclusion
of learners from marginalised communities in terms of remaining outside the mainstream knowledge and information society that Botswana is striving to become. The curriculum therefore limits the opportunities for distance learners in competing for well-paid employment to low-paid jobs such as tuck-shop assistants, cleaners or herd boys.

The other curriculum issue in which there is tension is the medium of instruction. The RNPE recommends the development of a language policy and provides for the teaching of mother tongue at early phases of education, but the policy implementation has not taken off yet in addressing the issues of mother tongue. The distance learner participants’ languages are yet to be codified. The distance learners from marginalised communities did not have the privilege of learning in their own language. What this means is that being educated in an unfamiliar language was restrictive and led to poor comprehension of concepts presented in an unfamiliar language.

Failure to understand concepts in printed learning materials resulted in learners disengaging. Low understanding resulted in some learners’ motivation decreasing to levels in which they failed to complete assignment and to study. Non-completion of assignments meant learners were unable to gauge their performance and led to frustration. When one enrols for a programme, the expectation is to engage with and grasp the content of in the learning materials. Where there is greater interaction between learners and tutors as happened at Kang, learners overcome the challenges of posed by the learning material. Where there is less or no interaction between learners and tutors, learning materials tend to be more structured because of the limited dialogue. Both Moore (1989) and Holmberg (2003) encourage interaction between learners and tutors in order to avert the challenges in the learning materials. The learning materials were written targeting second language speakers and not learners from marginalised communities who hardly speak English. There was therefore a mismatch between the medium of instruction as used in the learning materials and the proficiency of learners in the English language. These mismatches in terms of language and learning materials is what Evans (2006) terms instructional dissonance, that is, the ignorance or denial of barriers and distortions that negatively affect the learning event in particular for the learner. Instructional communication, whether verbal or written, must be meaningful before content can be mastered. The findings of my study are summarised in the next section.
The current curriculum relegates marginalized communities to the bottom of the Botswana social class because it is not diverse enough to offer broader study options for career development. The BGCSE offering is based on the National Curriculum Syllabus (BOCODOL Act No. 20 of 1998) but does not provide for pure sciences and practical vocational subjects for distance learners and BOCODOL has not yet developed learning materials which address the aspirations of learners who desire to study pure sciences and practical vocational subjects.

Distance learners from marginalised communities cannot engage private tutors for subjects not offered through distance as is the case for students living in villages and towns, and can thus not pursue careers within the pure sciences like engineering and medicine. At national level a diverse and balanced curriculum which addresses the needs of marginalised communities in Botswana as well as the national needs would encourage equitable integration rather than the current curriculum that promotes the assimilation of marginalised communities into the dominant Tswana ethnic group. Dewey (1944: 99) quoted by Perry (2009) argues that there should be a diverse offering of curriculum and instructional approaches to ensure that all learners can reach their maximum individual potential and that social classes should not be restricted to particular types of education. The current curriculum frustrates distance learners who complete the BGCSE only to discover that their educational choices are restricted. The pre-enrolment counseling and orientation programmes need to highlight these limitations when recruiting new enrollees. Furthermore, these learners are disadvantaged when it comes to government sponsorship. The government grant and loan scheme provides incentives to candidates who specialize in pure science and technology related programmes at tertiary level (Tau, 2006). Those who take pure science and technology programmes like medicine, radiography and ICT engineering are awarded grants. They are fully sponsored by government whilst those who take humanities are granted loans which they need to pay back, at times keeping them in debt for many years. The current curriculum offering if allowed to continue as is, has the potential to perpetuate social exclusion and injustice which may eventually lead to tensions between ethnic groups. Perry (2009) explains education by borrowing a perspective from the emancipatory, transformative and critical theorists and argues that education is as democratic in as much as it leads to the liberation of oppressed classes and transformation of oppressive social structures. Democratic education empowers individuals to free themselves from oppressive circumstances (Perry, 2009). All role-players in the Botswana distance learning area need to appraise seriously their current service provision in order to ensure that they do not exclude or short-change any citizen thereby defeating the government’s Vision 2016 goals.
In order to expand equitable access to education BOCODOL has a decentralised learner support system. In 2003, the Kang regional office was the first to involve elected learner representatives in management committees (BOCODOL Annual Report, 2004/5.) The involvement of learners draws on Freireian thinking (Perry 2009) which argues that the path to liberation comes through a critical awareness of one’s reality and that learners can become active subjects of their own destiny when they are in control of their learning. Through the learner management committees, learners have gradually become more responsible for their learning. The BOCODOL decentralised learner support system has a number of policy documents that guide ODL practitioners. However the formulation of some of these policies does not show any prolonged and broad consultations in terms of involving the representatives of marginalised communities. The consultancy for the remote learner strategy (Lelliot, 2002) was carried out from the 21st October to 1st November 2002. The limitation of the report is that it does not indicate any constraints met nor did it include the political and cultural representatives of marginalised groups in the consultation process. In a democracy, like Botswana, individuals are citizens rather than subjects and thus it is implicit that individuals or their representatives have a right to participate on issues that affect them directly or indirectly. The list of those who were consulted on page 26 of the remote learner consultancy report is dominated by the names of primary school teachers and officers from the dominant Tswana ethnic group, BOCODOL staff, seven learners at D’Kar, one at Etsha and five at Motokwe. The consultation on the remote learner strategy left out key informants who could have contributed by highlighting the uniqueness of their lifestyles and academic needs. A policy strategy that is more likely to address the needs of the targeted population group should include a thorough environmental scanning to identify strengths and key areas for improvement and aim to create affective experiences that alleviate isolation. It is critical to now develop clear policy guidelines on how to support distance learners in less developed contexts.

The findings of this study also implicitly point to inadequate training of learning centre coordinators as well as tutors. Training of ODL part-time staff and the execution of regular performance appraisals are central to the provision of quality learning support services. If tutors recruited from junior secondary schools had been adequately trained in the tenets of ODL and adequately supported by ODL staff, their competencies would have been on par with their counterparts recruited from senior secondary schools. Informed and knowledgeable tutors who have good teaching skills increase the quality of learning support and ensure that learners have confidence in those appointed to guide them.
It is imperative that a training policy or tutor manual should be developed with clear guidelines that promote pedagogical dialogue with distance learners in order to improve academic performance. Furthermore, financial and appropriate human resources should be mobilised to enhance learning support initiatives. In other words, the challenges faced by distance learners from marginalised communities require a more political and economic commitment from various national and local authorities including the District Council, local political and traditional representatives. These stakeholders should be made aware of the potential role of the distance education mode towards contributing to social development and empowerment of marginalised communities. An improved value of ODL awareness could lead to a political acceptance by national and local government, NGOs, and the private sector. This stakeholder support would see prioritisation of ODL issues and financial support for the development of educational facilities and resources in underdeveloped contexts. Infrastructural development for information and communication technology (ICT) and libraries could contribute towards the promotion of a reading culture as well as advancing a knowledge society.

The existing policy documents (the Enrolment Policy, the Guidance and Counseling Policy, the Learner Charter and the Remote Learner Strategy Consultancy Report) that guide the delivery of learner support at BOCODOL do not currently recognise the uniqueness of marginalised communities because the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) - from which the college policies are derived - regards all citizens of Botswana as equal. The pitiable socio-economic status of the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi requires a redress if social justice is to prevail. This therefore calls for policy changes and practical strategies targeting the improvement of education delivery to the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi. At a theoretical and practical level, a conversational learning theoretical framework which embraces empathy should be adopted to strengthen and inform the delivery of distance learning to marginalised communities in underdeveloped contexts. Besides the development of a policy strategy, managerial inadequacies in the delivery of learning support need to be addressed, hence the call for a practical strategy.

In order to develop appropriate strategies, which enhance best practice in the delivery of learning support in underdeveloped contexts the following is recommended:

- DE providers with distance learners from marginalised communities should ensure that a thorough needs assessment of learners is undertaken in order to produce learner
profiles and thus identify learner needs and expectations. These are helpful in the
design and development of appropriate learning materials and culturally sensitive
learning support services.

- ODL policy makers and managers charged with managing distance learners from
marginalised communities should be adequately trained through benchmarking with
similar institutions in countries like India, Kenya, and Nigeria, where education provision
for marginalised nomadic populations is attempting to address their needs and
aspirations.

- Criteria for selecting learning centre co-ordinators should be refined and empathy should
be a critical attribute to use in the selection. Roles and responsibilities of learning centre
coordinators should be clearly defined and all recruited coordinators should be
adequately inducted, mentored, monitored, and remunerated reasonably and timely, in
order to sustain their morale and to enable them to be effective helpers in rendering
learning, administrative, and personal support.

- The contents of the BGCSE curriculum should reflect aspects of the socio-cultural and
geographic contexts of marginalised communities in order for distance learners from
marginalised communities to relate easily to the new knowledge. Such an inclusion
would enhance the learning process, as learners would be able to connect with learning
materials that have relevance to their contexts. This is more likely to promote positive
academic performance.

- Learning support should be comprehensive and be embedded in the learning materials.
In other words, language and study skills support should be made an integral part of the
learning materials. Such a step will help support learners to progress with fewer
challenges in the study units.

- Internal and external quality audit checks currently undertaken at the regional centre
should be extended to community study and learning satellite centres in order to
promote accountability at all levels. This will encourage distance learners to be involved
in the quality assurance processes and will give them confidence that systems are
working towards improving their learning events. It will also encourage ODL
practitioners to effectively support distance learners, as they will be aware that the
process of appraising their effectiveness extends right up to distance learners. Such a
practice would lead to best practice as processes and procedures are adhered to. The
delivery of learning support services would address the needs and expectations of distance learners.

- A communication and academic literacy support programme targeting distance learners whose mother tongue is not English should be developed and delivered preferably through face-to-face contact. Such language support in the medium of instruction is critical for coping with independent study.

- Empowerment strategies through initiatives such as creating communities of learning through the establishment of learner management structures should be promoted at all learning centres. This has the advantage of fostering cohesion (Perry, 2009) and as such instils solidarity and increased sense of belongingness. These aspects are important for retention and motivating learners to complete their programmes. Such initiatives are likely to encourage distance learners to take responsibility for their learning and to engage DE providers on policy aspects. To illustrate, the promises in the learner charter and the learners’ handbook would be challenged and this would lead to improved support.

- ODL advocacy involving traditional leadership and sponsorship of distance learners from marginalised communities should be promoted through community engagement and meetings. This would help distance learners to be supported by their communities and family members. Participation of family members and local traditional representatives in ODL special events like open days and prize-giving ceremonies can also help in the retention of learners and marketing of ODL products and services. Relevant messages can be communicated to families and sponsors to market ODL and to counter any misconceptions about distance education and feelings of social exclusion.

- Political mobilisation, networking and advocacy should be carried out targeting key stakeholders like representatives of marginalised communities through the various media, in order to plea for infrastructural development that support the provision of enhanced quality learning support services through appropriate media and technology. I therefore recommend a learning support network strategy.

*Learning Support Network Strategy*

The learning support network strategy I recommend is presented in Figure 1. The strategy is meant to enhance ODL and learning support within a remote rural context. The strategy should take on board key stakeholders in remote settlements such as the traditional leadership in this
case the Kgosi (Chief) and the political leadership represented by a local Councillor. The leadership in the person of the chief and councillor is strategic in spearheading development at the settlement. As head of the village the Kgosi is recognised by government and respected for his traditional control of the village and his community. He has a critical voice when it comes to issues of welfare for his community and service delivery is likely to be made when he appeals to the relevant authorities. The Councillor, on the other hand, is the elected head of a political ward in which the settlement (village) belongs and has the political power. This person can propose and present motions on developmental matters and the needs of his or her village at District Council meetings.

**Figure 1 Learning support network strategy**

For leadership to take up ODL concerns, BOCODOL ought to advocate for and educate the village leadership on the value of education and the advantages of using ODL in remote rural context. The advantages of ICTs in distance learning if well articulated, by the leadership at village level could be scaled up by the relevant authorities. The leadership in remote rural settlements of a democratic country like Botswana have voting power and definite influence over the community on who to vote for, so Government tends to listen to their concerns and
makes attempts at addressing them. The leadership in remote rural areas - if well mobilised - can convince private companies to demonstrate their social responsibility by enabling their communities to enjoy digital connectivity. It is through this leadership that the community should be engaged and encouraged to elect a Village ODL Committee with the mandate of promoting distance learning by using advocacy, mobilising financial resources for the vulnerable members of their community, lobbying for ICT infrastructural development and improved radio broadcasting services, library and other academic support facilities in their settlement in order to enhance the experience of learning at a distance.

The Village Community shares norms and values that they transmit from one generation to the next. As a community the people have aspirations and needs that they endeavour to address mainly through the Kgotla system headed by the Kgosi. During a Kgotla meeting every member of the community has the right to speak and to make suggestions that can be adopted by the community. It is therefore crucial for BOCODOL to take advantage of the Kgotla meetings engage the remote rural communities through public education and in the process also promote ODL. When remote rural communities appreciate the role of ODL and the advantages it provides, they are more likely to promote and participate in ODL. They are also more likely to put pressure on their political leaders and demand that government put in place the critical infrastructures for ICTs, road and transport networks so that they are connected to major service centres. Actually, BOCODOL should engage the Botswana Telecommunications corporation and other stakeholders and explore possible appropriate ICTs for example; Wifi technology, given that studies by Hasson et al., (2003) that indicate Wifi as one technology that can open up new possibilities for rural connectivity in developing countries.

The uptake of ODL in remote rural areas can be facilitated by the communities constituting a Village ODL Committee. This committee can advance ODL advocacy mobile resources from various sources and support the mentoring and tutoring of distance learners from their community. An ODL committee constituted through the Kgotla chaired by the Kgosi is more likely to deliver on its mandate as it is supported by the community in its activities. As community representatives, the Committee is more likely to be consulted by government and to be used by ODL providers as part of consultation in the development of learning materials that are culturally sensitive and accommodate the values, needs and aspirations of these remote distance learners.
The District Council is a local government structure created by national government to deliver social services such as health and education to communities including those in far rural contexts. For remote rural areas the government of Botswana has employed Rural Development Officers (RADO) who take care of the basic needs of communities that have been relocated like the Basarwa and Bakgalagadi. RADO are therefore key stakeholders for ODL initiatives in remote rural areas.

The ODL provider through the Regional Centre should provide a mobile support vehicle for its remote service as was previously suggested by Lelliot (2002). Investment in such a mobile support vehicle could enable the provision of library support and media services critical for remote distance learners.
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