

December 7, 2020

E-Learning Workshop in Mozambique

In March 2020 a workshop was held in Johannesburg, South Africa to explore the potential for using online learning for theological education in Southern Africa. The workshop was organized and funded by Cliff College, Britain, and The Endowment Fund for Theological Education in the Central Conferences with Dr. David Field, coordinator for the Methodist e-Academy in Europe and a native of South Africa.

In the days and weeks following this workshop most Southern African countries went into lockdown to counter the threat of Covid-19. One of the participants in the workshop was Dr Julio Vilanculos who is the Vice Chancellor of the United Methodist University of Mozambique. He was impressed with the potential of online learning for theological education in Mozambique. This perspective was strengthened by the restrictions on presence teaching during the lockdown. Planned follow up meetings to explore this potential were not possible due to the pandemic. At the end of November an online meeting was arranged with representatives from three of the four United Methodist Theological educational institutions in Mozambique.



A common feature of all four institutions is a shortage of faculty members to teach all the required courses. This is in part a result of financial constraints. Dr Julio Vilanculos noted that: “e-learning program will help to have different institutions connected and this facilitate to have professors from different Universities teaching in other faculties without spending funds for transportation, accommodation etc.”

Filipe Augusto Hogueane, the director of the Cambine Theological Seminary, emphasized that e-learning will provide students with the opportunity to learn from a greater variety of teachers and thus be enriched by diverse perspectives on various topics.

The United Methodist University is the only university in the country offering degrees in theology. A challenge and an opportunity that they face is that there are numerous potential students, however many of these potential students do not have the resources to leave their homes to study full time at the university. Dr Vilanculos commented: “the introduction of e-learning program is of great importance because more people will be able to get enrolled at university and saving time and money to pay for accommodation and will be staying with their parents/guardians while studying. In addition to that, for theology, more people will get chance to be enrolled for their theological studies while living in the provinces which are far from the University.”

The participants at the meeting are planning to hold a follow up meeting in January to plan for the implementation of an online theological education project. Representatives from UMC institutions in Angola will also be invited to this meeting.

These activities support the Endowment Fund's focus area of "new avenues of theological education" and are a collaboration of the Endowment Fund with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Perkins School of Theology, Cliff College, and the British Methodist Church. Together we are working toward a worldwide network for virtual forms of theological education. The Endowment Fund has the unique chance to support and strengthen these innovative initiatives by convening leaders in the area and raising sustainable funding for program elements and scholarships to participate. A permanent endowment is being developed and gifts and pledges are needed from across the world. For more information, visit: www.umctheologyeducation.org.