

The Impact of a Global Educator
Profile of Josiah Tlou

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IA Perspectives

Dr. Josiah Tlou, Professor Emeritus at Virginia Tech, shared with me, a bit about his background, professional work, and special projects in African countries that have resulted in substantive educational program development there.

Background

Dr. Tlou was born, raised, and trained to teach in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). He began teaching at the middle school level and then became the principal of a Lutheran boarding school. In the 1960s, he came to the U. S. to complete his undergraduate studies at Luther College, through a sponsorship from the Lutheran World Federation of Switzerland. He then continued his studies at the master's level at Illinois State University. Josiah taught at Luther College for four years before completing his doctoral work at the University of Illinois-Urbana, where he earned a degree in Curriculum Development with a Social Studies emphasis and a minor in Comparative Education.

Virginia Tech and International Work

Dr. Josiah Tlou worked as a professor in the College of Education at Virginia Tech for over 30 years, retiring in 2004. He was a social studies teacher educator, curriculum development specialist, and Director of the Center for Research and Development in International Development. Dr. Tlou has had extensive experience in universities in the United States and Africa. He has done field research in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, and also did some work in South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, and Lesotho. He served as a consultant for universities, school associations, and numerous international organizations, such as USAID and UNICEF. The map of Africa shows the projects that Dr. Tlou led over a 25-year period. Josiah provides some detail here:

Many of those projects were very successful in that the graduates from the projects are in leadership positions in their countries today. For example in Malawi, with USAID sponsorship, Virginia Tech trained a total of 12 Ph.Ds and 24 Masters in Education students in the past 10 years. These two groups of educators became the founding instructors for a Bachelor of Education degree program at Domasi College, enrolling 30 students each year since 2004. They have now graduated 5 cohorts of 30 each for a total of 150 who have earned degrees from this project. They are now deployed in various sectors of the Ministry of Education. In Botswana, it is the same. The University of Botswana is quite successful with the department we established in primary education. In fact, for the first 15 years of its existence, the deans of the School of Education at the University of Botswana came from our project.

I have also worked on civics curriculum development in Malawi under the

sponsorship of USAID, and one of my former students agreed to set up a Civitas chapter in Malawi. We also set up a Civitas chapter in Kenya at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. They were helped by the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, California. These two groups are doing well.

I have just completed a 5-month consultancy with UNICEF to develop the Road Map of the Curriculum Review Process for the Zimbabwe education system. We are also working with the New Partnership in Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is the organization of the African Union (AU). The African Union would like to have 600,000 schools wired with internet connectivity across the continent of Africa. They have already laid an under sea broadband cable from Morocco to Djibouti on the Red Sea. They are now laying fiber optic cables in many African countries.

I have seen the cables being laid as I go around to many countries in Africa that are connected to the under sea broadband cable. Virginia Tech has now signed a memorandum of understanding with NEPAD as a resource institution to help train teachers on the use of instructional technology. We appointed one of our members to be one of the experts on NEPAD's team at their request. “

Recently a colleague and I traveled to Zambia to have discussions with the Ministry of Education for establishing a degree program in vocational and technical education at the University of Zambia. Currently, four doctoral students from Zambia are enrolled at Virginia Tech in Vocational and Technical Education. This is our latest project.”

Grants Awarded and Recognition

Josiah Tlou and his colleagues and partner organizations were awarded grants totaling over 4 million dollars for cultural exchanges, Fulbright, and program development projects. Josiah was given three awards from Virginia Tech University and Luther College: The Virginia Tech College of Education, Dean's Excellence in Service Award, (1986); the Alumni Award for Excellence in International Programs (2002) from the Virginia Tech University Office of International Programs; and an Honorary Degree for International Service, Doctor of Humane Letters, from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa (2003).

Dr. Tlou's ongoing commitment to global education and his contributions to the work of many state departments of education, schools, educators, and students around the world is impressive. We greatly value and appreciate his work and wish him continued success.

Editor's Note

Through Josiah's service to the International Assembly we established connections to the Mwanje Primary School in Malawi that have enabled us to begin projects there as well. Our initial project was the Adopt-A-School Project, which provided backpacks to students. Josiah's colleague Patricia Kelly of Virginia Tech graciously delivered the backpacks for us each year of the project.

Given the needs of the community there, Frans Doppen was inspired to begin a Well Project to provide water to the community. He and his students have raised most of the necessary funds already and only \$1,500 is needed to complete the project. Please join us in this effort by emailing Vice-President and Program Chair of the International Assembly, Frans Doppen at doppen@ohio.edu to offer your donation.