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## Benefits of Using an Activity Guide

Activity guides are learning resources that are often under-utilized. In the previous article Christine Randell provided an outline of the materials development workshops conducted in Limpopo and here she highlights the benefits of developing activity guides.

## News in Brief

**SAIDE Participates in Bring a Girl Child to Work**

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## Rural Development Facilitators' Pilot Programme

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This programme follows an extensive Kellogg-funded research project which SAIDE under took over four years that investigated possibilities of using distance education approaches to help develop rural communities. As one of the key outputs of that research project SAIDE facilitated a process to conceptualise and develop a proposal for an integrated rural development facilitators' programme. Participants in the process came from organizations such as:

- Sustainable Energy Environment and Development (SEED) based at the University of Cape Town,
- Mvula Trust,
- Primary Agriculture and Education Training Authority (PAETA),
- Unisa ABET Institute, and
- National Community Water and Sanitation Training Institute (NCWSTI) based at the University of Limpopo

In preparing for the roll-out of the pilot, SAIDE is engaging its partners to:

- Re-define and finalize the overall purpose of the programme - to ensure that the programme is relevant to its targeted groups, and that it contributes to the broader vision of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy which is:

  "To attain socially cohesive and stable communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract skilled and knowledgeable people, equipped to contribute to their own and the nation's growth and development."

- Finalise the target audience of the Rural Development Facilitator Programme.
- Identify key content (knowledge and skills) to be included in the programme.
- Determine overall structure for the content in the learning modules.
- Clarify teaching and learning methods/technologies.
- Identify possible existing learning materials to be drawn upon and possible course developers.

### Facilitating Outcomes Based Learning and Teaching: A Guide for Trainers and FET College Lecturers Prepared for the Khanyisa Support Programme in Limpopo province

*As part of the ongoing work that SAIDE has been doing in the Khanyisa Support Programme in Further Education & Training (FET) colleges in Limpopo province, lecturers have been trained to adapt and develop teaching and learning materials to support delivery of the new unit standard-based programmes. Maryla Bialobrzeska reports.*

While schools across the whole of South Africa began the largest curriculum change the country had ever seen – the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and outcomes-based education (OBE), as far back as 1998, lecturers in FET colleges have had to embrace different challenges. These included the complex processes of college rationalisation and mergers, the introduction of new types of programmes such as Learnerships and short skills programmes and new requirements around assessor training and mentoring. There has, however, been very little systematic development or training in the FET college sector around issues pertaining to curriculum and OBE until very recently.

Now, in line with the schooling sector, and indeed with world trends, new ideas and approaches to education are being explored in South African FET colleges. The focus is on making teaching more *learner–centred*, more *outcomes-based,* with a more *problem-solving* nature, and *transforming curricula to be more responsive* to the needs of commerce and industry.

SAIDE was requested to develop a guide that trainers could use to facilitate OBE training of FET lecturers. The guide developed by SAIDE uses an activity-based approach which is intended to help lecturers internalise and consolidate their understanding of the OBE approach. The following key issues are explored:

### Changing contexts
South Africa and the world at large have undergone rapid socio-political and economic change. This has direct implications for education.

To meet these new needs, curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment in FET colleges needs to be improved – education and training must become more responsive.

To drive the transformation process, South African educational policy has been underpinned by an OBE-approach that emphasizes a shift from content-driven, transmission teaching to an outcomes or competency-based approach that is learner-centred.

### New roles for educators
To meet the challenges of the new educational approach, lecturers' roles have been re-conceptualised. Lecturers need to be supported to make the paradigm shift that is required to understand OBE and its purpose, and to understand the necessary competences that are essential for fulfilling the expanded roles of the educator.

Becoming a reflective practitioner – understanding where we have come from, why we teach the way we do and cultivating the habit of continually reviewing our practice as educators to improve the quality and efficacy of our delivery are key to making the necessary transition.

The guide deals with the principles of outcomes-based planning, assessment and strategies for teaching in a learner-centred way - examples from technical and vocational subjects are used to contextualise the content.

### Principles of outcomes-based planning
Curriculum design in OBE works on a design down principle.

The three essential components of classroom-level planning are detailed descriptions of:

- What the learner must be able to know and do by the end of the teaching processes.
- The kinds of performances/evidence that students must produce in order to demonstrate that they have achieved the outcome.
- How you will teach, and how students will learn (content, methodology and resources.)

A key point made in the guide is that the most important benefit of planning is not necessarily the written plan that we carry into the class, but the fact that planning forces us into thinking about our teaching.

**Assessment**
Criterion-referenced assessment used as part of the new educational approach, requires that the assessment criteria are made explicit so that every student is able to understand how her/his work is to be assessed. Another significant shift is from summative to a continuous, formative approach to assessment. In OBE, assessment is viewed as integral to learning and teaching and not just something that one adds on at the end of a unit of learning. Its purpose is as much about improving the quality of teaching as it is about monitoring student progress.

The guide challenges lecturers to look beyond the well-used modes of assessing to new modes such as observation, use of portfolios which help to track progress over time, peer- and self-assessment which help students to reflect on their own and others' work.

**Teaching strategies**
Finally, the guide deals with a number of well-known, whole-class teaching strategies such as, explanation, demonstration and questioning which still form the backbone of teaching practice, but are now approached in an interactive and learner-centred way. Well-structured and well-managed group work is also examined.
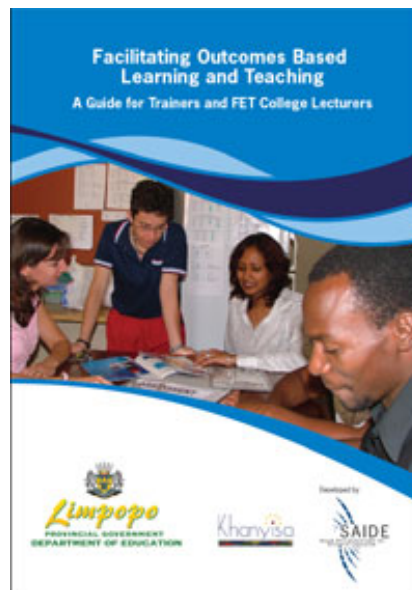
### Qualified Teachers for the Future Through I.YA.KURE, Rwanda

*From 19 April to 03 May 2006, Christine Randell and Tony Mays were in Rwanda to undertake a review of the Distance Training Programme of the Kigali Institute of Education. Tony Mays reports on their visit.*

The review was based on the NADEOSA (2005) quality guidelines and required three outputs:

- a numerical scoring of the programme against the NADEOSA criteria;
- a project completion report for the funders (Department of International Development – DfID) of the programme set-up and first cohort; and
- recommendations for the future.

The review was undertaken on the basis of the evidence-led approach that characterises the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) review process in South Africa. Attempts were made to triangulate where possible e.g. by reading a policy document, then interviewing and observing people who had to implement the policy to see whether, and how this actually happened, and finally interviewing end-users of the policy to see whether the implementation had met the purpose for which the policy was intended. Another strategy used was to ask the same question separately of multiple groups of stakeholders. At the end of the process, and before finalising their overall report, the SAIDE team had the opportunity to engage with the distance training programme's own internal evaluation against the criteria. This proved to be a useful exercise and created an opportunity for discussion and dialogue that would not have been so dynamic had the SAIDE team received the internal review at the start as originally planned.

In conducting the review, the SAIDE team had both individual and focus group interviews with the Kigali Institute of Education Rectorate, Distance Training Office staff, Regional Coordinators, Module Writers, Tutors, Students, School Managers and the Distance Training Educational Advisor. Site visits were also undertaken to one Regional Centre and two schools. The team reviewed documentation at national, institutional and project level as well as a sample of 26 modules and assessment instruments from the programme.

*I.YA.KURE* is a Kinyarwanda acronym for *Inyigisho ya Kure* which roughly translates as Distance Education. The full name is *Inyigisho Yateguriwe Abashishikajwe no Kurerera, Kwigisha Ubumenyi, Ubuhanga n' Ubukorikori u Rwanda rw' Ejo:* training programme prepared for those committed and interested in educating, imparting knowledge, science and technology to the Rwandese future generations.

The in-service curriculum offered by the distance training programme is the same as the pre-service curriculum offered by the Kigali Institute of Education and is based on a curriculum framework that was drawn up by a regional task team following the genocide in 1994 and the need to rebuild the country. As with many start-up distance education projects run from within a contact-based institution and dependent on full-time academics to write the study materials, the development process took longer than expected. However, over the past five years, the I.YA.KURE project has successfully developed over 100 modules in four subject combinations (Maths/ Physics-Education; Biology/ Chemistry- Education; French/ English- Education; English Language/Literature-Education) and has made progress in developing materials for Kinyarwanda and the social sciences. The programme has been offered through a network of ten learning centres offering weekend tutorials and examination sessions, with four of these centres doubling as regional centres for residential sessions. The programme boasts retention and pass-rate figures that would be the envy of most distance education AND residential institutions in South Africa. The first graduates from the programme should exit at the end of this year with a Diploma that is equivalent to the first two years of the degree programme. In future, it is expected that students will be able to complete the Diploma programme in three years.

The SAIDE team feel that the main challenges for the I.YA.KURE programme in the future are to adapt systems to take the programme to scale, as the original cohort was limited to 500 students (of whom 465 are still with the programme), and to adapt the curriculum to speak more to the actual experience of the learner and the teacher in the classroom. Kigali Institute of Education and its Distance Training Programme are in the process of developing a website so, hopefully sometime soon, it will be possible to access more detailed information on their plans and progress online.

### The e-Learning Africa Conference: A Report from Addis Ababa

*Neil Butcher reports on this conference organized in Ethiopia in May, 2006 under the patronage of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia's Ministry of Capacity-Building and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa .*



The e-Learning Africa Conference took place in Addis Ababa from May 24 to 26, 2006. According to the conference website, it was the largest event on educational technologies and development ever to have taken place in Africa, attracting 832 participants from 80 countries (over 70% of whom were from African countries). This was indeed a major gathering, with many of the people around the continent in the field of educational technology gathering to discuss e-Learning issues.

The conference itself was preceded by 13 pre-conference workshops covering different themes, which seem to have been well-attended. I personally attended a workshop organized by UNESCO and the European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning on *Quality for e-Learning in Africa*, where I was also required to facilitate a session on the UNESCO Knowledge Base for Open and Distance Learning ([www.africaodl.org](www.africaodl.org)). This was the primary reason for my attendance at the conference. Most of the pre-conference workshops were informative and engaging, offering good opportunities for discussion and debate of key issues.

From there, we moved into the main conference, which followed a very traditional organizational structure of opening plenary sessions and keynote speeches on each day, followed by a series of parallel sessions. On the face of it, the choice seemed somewhat bewildering, with more than 250 speakers presenting papers over the course of the conference. Amongst these were many interesting presentations (and many more which looked interesting, but where there were difficulties attending multiple sessions).

Most importantly, the conference provided an excellent opportunity for networking with peers involved in educational technology from around the continent. From this perspective the conference was a great success, as so many key people were gathered together and opportunities for interaction were fantastic. Having noted this, however, the conference was also flawed in several really important ways. First, there were simply too many papers being presented within the timeframe. Each parallel session included presentation of around five to six papers, leaving almost no meaningful opportunity for engagement and debate. Speakers always seemed rushed, and question-time typically ran into the breaks to accommodate just the most preliminary questions.

Second, the method of organizing sessions seemed incoherent. In the sessions that I attended, papers seemed to have been clustered opportunistically rather than because they matched the theme of the session. This was quite frustrating as it reduced opportunities for constructing meaningful intellectual debate. It also seemed apparent from early on that little quality control had been done to process submissions. Thus, while there were many excellent papers, there were also too many papers and presentations that simply should not have been included in the conference programme.

## Public Management Training Programme Evaluation
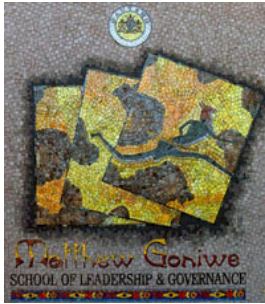


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The terms of reference highlighted three main focus areas for the evaluation, these were to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the training in equipping Institutional Development and Support Officials (IDSOs) with the relevant skills and insight to perform their functions;
- Assess the materials developed for the training; and
- Assess the quality of the training facilitation.

The key role and function of IDSOs (who were previously called school inspectors) is the support and monitoring of policy implementation and school development in management, administration and governance. In addition they co-ordinate district-school linkages.

Currently, experience in the field of management is not a requirement for employment as an IDSO. While some IDSOs may have been school principals previously, the majority have not had any management experience, yet one of the IDSOs' key functions is the management of managers. In the past IDSOs were absorbed into posts as part of the restructuring process, or appointed with no induction, and were expected to "hit the ground running".

All this pointed to the dire need for in-service-based professional development. The PCPM was selected as the means of achieving this goal.

This programme provides excellent opportunity for the development of intellectual skills in the domains covered by the six modules (Governance and Development, Managing Information and Communication, Public Policy, Economics and Public Finance, Managing Change and Managing Service Delivery). Due to financial constraints, it was agreed that this programme would not have a work-based component. The development of practical management and administration monitoring and support skills can therefore only be inferred from responses to activities and assignments, and are not directly assessed. However, the portfolio requirement does allow for assessment of practical competence through specially-designed applied assignments.

The PCPM was run as a pilot and is also the first such intervention nationally. The results have proven that it is a sound programme that can be built on in future. As the first-ever full qualification to have been designed to support IDSOs' professional development, the PCPM has contributed significantly to capacitating IDSOs in their task of building quality schools in Gauteng.

### News in Brief : Bring a Girl Child to Work

SAIDE recently supported the national Bring a Girl Child to Work campaign. Relebohile (known as Lebo) Thabane spent a day in the SAIDE Resource Centre – this is what Lebo had to say about the day:

"The experience of Bring a Girl Child to Work at SAIDE was unforgettable. Jenny Louw welcomed me with enthusiasm while she showed me the ins and outs of the resource centre and all the responsibilities her job entails. I was given the task of source newspaper articles on education that would help other employees with their tasks. An important factor that I learned about the Resource Centre was that information had to be easily accessible, which is why I was given the important task of putting the books in their correct order. Jenny was kind enough to give me advice on the possible careers I am considering. I would like to thank Jenny, together with SAIDE, for granting me the opportunity and supporting young women leaders in reaching their full potential."

### News in Brief: NADEOSA Conference Support from Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA)

NADEOSA is delighted to announce that OSISA will be supporting our conference in bringing out two of our keynote speakers – Professor KP Dzvimbo, Rector of the African Virtual University and Professor Mary Thorpe of the Institute of Educational Technology from the Open University (UK). In addition key OSISA speakers will introduce topics such as:

- Open Access
- Introduction to Institutional Repositories
- The Access to Knowledge Campaign
- Achieving Affordable Bandwidth for Africa
- Progressive Publishing through Use of Creative Commons.

Papers will be presented during the conference and a further workshop will be hosted on Friday 25 the August by OSISA specifically for NADEOSA and DEASA members on the above topics.

Our line-up of keynote speakers, including Sir John Daniel, President of the Commonwealth of Learning and Associate Professor Som Naidu of the University of Melbourne, is the most impressive that NADEOSA has seen in its ten year history. We have extended the early bird registration to 30 June. Please register your interest in attending the conference as soon as possible with Jenny Louw.