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The new programme has been championed by the Department of Education in partnership with 14 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Financial support is being provided by the Shuttleworth Foundation. The need for this programme is the result of extended discussion and research which has seen the emergence of a new national standard for principalship which articulates the expectations that we should have both of incumbent principals and those who aspire to the position.

A draft programme has been developed and the next phase of the project is to develop learning materials that the HEIs can pilot over the next two years in an action-based, research-grounded delivery strategy. SAIDE has been commissioned to manage the materials development process. The inaugural materials development workshop brought together members of the Project Management Team, the Editorial and Reference Groups and potential materials developers in order to:

- develop a common understanding of the purpose, nature and structure of the proposed programme;
- identify key design principles;
- assign roles and responsibilities, and
- agree on an iterative materials development process.

The following key guiding principles were agreed during the workshop:

• **Transformation**

The programme must bring about demonstrable improvement both in the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values of individual school leaders as well as in the schools they lead and manage. To this end the programme's assessment strategy emphasizes site-based research, action, reflection and practice.

• **Increase body of knowledge**

In the process of designing and delivering the new programme, we should learn and share more about the dynamics of being a school principal in South Africa today.

• **Think systemically**

In considering the tasks we set for students taking the programme and the support that they will need through the process, we need to think systemically in terms of both opportunities and constraints.

• **Learn from experience**

The programme will have a strong action-research based component and must seek to develop the reflexive competence of the student-principals on the programme.

• **Think partnerships**

In designing materials and considering the necessary support systems, the materials development team has been urged to think of the possibilities of partnership between agencies such as the school, the community it serves, the Department, NGOs and the HEIs who will offer the programme. It must also encourage collaboration and discussion between students on the programme and with other colleagues in the school, cluster and region.

• **Realistic timelines**

As far as possible, the programme should design learning and performance tasks that fit in with the school academic cycles and should be realistic about the expectations of students with regard to activities and deadlines in recognition that the targeted students are all already in full-time employment.



- **Ongoing support**

The programme design takes cognisance of the fact that support is a process and not an event and begins from the initial selection, orientation and induction of students into the programme. As the programme and materials development unfolds, so different student (and school) support needs will come to light and will need to be addressed. On completion of the programme, there will still be need for ongoing support both to students and their schools in the ongoing transformation process.

In addition to the background discussion documents, the curriculum outline and the broad design principles summarised above, the materials development team took cognisance of the NADEOSA Courseware Awards criteria which will inform the learning design of the programme materials.



Child Online Safety National Symposium

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The symposium consisted of a range of players – including national and provincial government representatives, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, and various educational institutions (including several practising teachers).

Constructive presentations were used to lay the foundation for the symposium. Lyndwill Clarke, then Acting Director of Curriculum Innovation from the National Department of Education, set the scene by highlighting the significance of computers in education. Horacio Gutierrez, Microsoft's Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) Associate General Counsel discussed Microsoft's efforts in relation to child online safety. Colin Erasmus, Security Head for Microsoft South Africa, provided an exceptionally insightful presentation regarding the dangers of the Internet, safety measures for children as well as other security and safety issues. Danielle Heyns, Chief Education Specialist for Curriculum Innovation and e-Learning from the National Department of Education, introduced *Thutong*, the National Education Portal. The presentations were followed by an interactive discussion lead by Neil Butcher, project leader for *Thutong*.

Discussion highlighted a number of online threats that children face. For example, according to Colin Erasmus, one in five children is sexually solicited on the Internet. Older users go into chat rooms with the intention of sexually soliciting young individuals. The term *technophilia* has been coined to describe these online perpetrations. There was mention of a case in South Africa where 100 gigabytes of child pornography was found on a computer in KwaZulu-Natal. According to Colin Erasmus, more and more children are moving towards the Internet for fun and interaction, with the result that 10% of children are said to be Internet addicts (addiction is defined as spending between five to ten hours a day on the Internet).



The discussion focused on broader security issues and the following were highlighted as threats in the online environment: spam, chat rooms, viruses, spyware, password generators and phishing.

Discussion at the symposium then moved towards developing strategies to deal with these threats, particularly in schools. Various suggestions to promote children's safety were proposed, such as the development of school policies and getting both parents and learners to sign codes of conduct related to Internet usage; installing filtering and blocking software and monitoring Internet usage.

Particular emphasis was placed on the critical role that parents have to play in this process, as well as the importance of educating children about risks in the online environment, rather than simply relying on technical and other systems to 'protect' them from danger.

In his presentation Horacio Gutierrez proposed a model (Figure 1.1) of the key role-players who need to collaborate to ensure a holistic approach to child online safety.

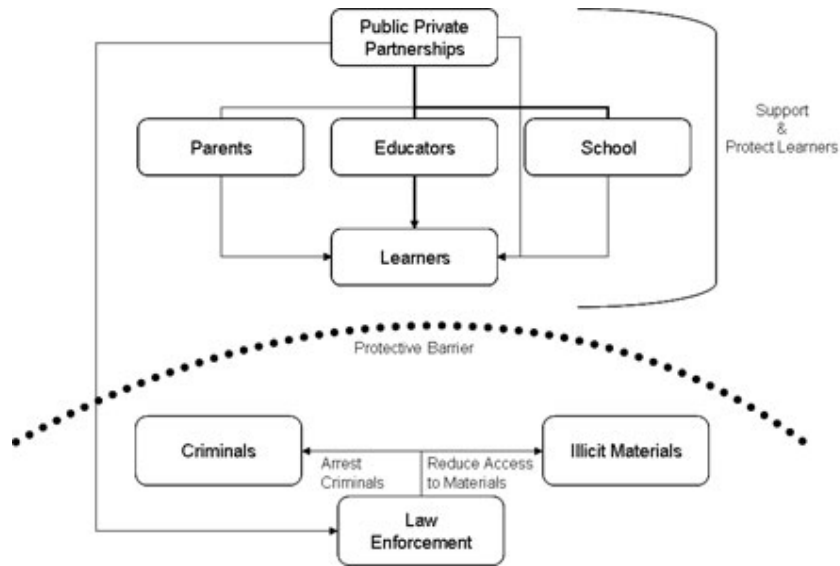


Figure 1.1 – Diagrammatic representation of role and responsibilities

The Microsoft Child Online Safety Symposium yielded a number of proposals which will be used to address the issue of online safety throughout South Africa. These outcomes include:

- Creation of a public-private partnership forum in the education sector.
- Development of a plan of action to facilitate:
 - Creation of a comprehensive set of guidelines for protecting children on Thutong, the South African national education portal.
 - Use of Thutong as a vehicle for ensuring the safety of South Africa's children online.

A mini-site for the [Child Online Safety](#) project has been set up on Thutong.

DEASA Focuses on Quality in Research

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In September 2005 in Botswana, a workshop entitled *Research in ODL* was held, the outcome of which was the development of research proposal entitled *Enhancing Academic Performance through Quality Learner Support Provision in DEASA Member Institutions*.

The intention is for member institutions to use the proposal to conduct research in their countries so that a coordinated set of findings and conclusions for the region as a whole can emerge.

From 24 – 26 March 2006, a second workshop was held in Mozambique [the most recent country to join DEASA - other member countries are Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa]. The topic of this workshop was *Quality Issues in Conducting Research* . The purpose of the workshop was:

- To build a shared understanding of quality issues in the process of conducting research
- To contribute to the further development of the DEASA winning research proposal
- To stimulate practical implementation of the DEASA learner support research in member countries.

In September 2006, the third workshop in the series will be held in Zimbabwe, and will focus on using ICTs in research and the processes of publishing research.

With sponsorship from the British Council, SAIDE contributed to the March 2006 by assisting the DEASA Research and Publications Committee in two ways:

- planning the workshop with the Chair of the Research and Publications Committee, and
- making a presentation during the workshop on key quality issues in conducting research emerging from the workshop.

The presentation *Quality Issues in Conducting Research ...so far* [Insert link to : Key quality issues in conducting research – so far, a presentation by Tessa Welch synthesises the quality issues emerging from a keynote address by Dr TJ Nhundu from Botswana, as well as those from group discussions as participants commented on and further refined the research proposal.

International Internet Forum on the UNESCO Higher Education ODL Knowledge Base

Introduction

In 2002 UNESCO initiated its Higher Education Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Knowledge Base which had a primary objective of offering decision-makers in the developing world practical tools for making informed policy choices on ODL. A three week discussion was held in March 2006 to create an awareness of the tools developed through the project, including the decision support tool and the three regional databases (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Community of Independent States (C.I.S) and Baltic States. Jenny Louw provides a summary of the discussion.

Each week had a specific focus:

- Week One – Content of the Three Databases.
- Week Two – Decision Support Tool and Quality Assurance.
- Week Three – Future Developments and the Way Forward.

Content of the Databases with a Focus on the African Database

Conversation in the first week was very lively, although there was confusion at the outset as to what we were trying to achieve from the engagement. However, discussion questions were soon formulated and the responses were all very encouraging in moving the project to a next stage.

Listed below are some strengths and some suggested improvements emerging from the discussion:

Strengths

- Website architecture is easy to navigate.
- The database provides useful content and it constitutes a useful model for sharing knowledge amongst African scholars, policy-makers, institutions, countries and regions.
- The resource upload tool is invaluable for contributing relevant resources.
- An emphasis on the collection of regional resources.
- The possibility of searching for articles through either a topic or author search.
- Regional sites provide a specific geographic focus, however, the linking to a single global project provides a powerful resource for comparative research across regions.

Suggestions for Improvement

- Increasing awareness of the UNESCO Knowledge Base. As a result of a lack of awareness content is possibly not a true reflection of all research, case studies, and articles. We need to bring the site to the attention of country associations again and seek their support for the project. Further to this comment was that we need to build a community of practice to support the project. It was noted that a vehicle for publicizing the site could be through UNESCO activities in Africa.
- Reducing the number of topics.
- Adding papers in local languages with English abstracts.
- Sharing of good practice amongst ODL institutions in Africa using the Knowledge Base as the vehicle for sharing resources.
- Improving the quality of the information within the database. Suggestions included careful editing of existing information as there are both factual and language inaccuracies; commissioning of papers to plug gaps in the material on offer, including papers on policy, funding, learner support systems, quality assurance systems and protocols.
- Increasing the number of subject-specific resources, particularly in science and engineering education.
- Adding statistical information about population, scholarly, and other figures that might be helpful for researchers and policy-makers.
- Including lists of institutions in the region that offer open and distance learning.

Conditions for Success

Besides suggestions for improving the site there was also concern as to the sustainability of the site. Neil Butcher, a primary architect of the project commented:

"My contention is that donors and other agencies investing heavily in distance education programmes in the developing world should see investments in managing knowledge of distance education practice in developing country contexts (a very small investment by comparison) as a critical part of their business, as it provides a key mechanism to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. Given the scale of investment in ODL in some parts of the world, the primary rationale for investing in information is to prevent large-scale wastage through poor design and implementation which might have been avoided through access to better information on past experiences."

This comment was supported by Raj Dhanarajan, former President of the Commonwealth of Learning:

"A data bank such as the ones that are being attempted can only be of value if there is a long term commitment to maintain and regularly refresh the site by those sponsoring it... If sites like the African and Asian ones are to survive and perpetuate there must be a different way of underpinning their cost. A way that does not begin the venture with thoughts of exit strategies!"

Decision Support Tool and Quality Assurance

In the second week of discussion Neil Butcher introduced the purpose of the Decision Support Tool (DST) to the Forum:

"The purpose of the DST is to assist decision-makers (in international organizations, as well as at national and institutional level) to make first-level assessments about the viability and quality of new and/or existing distance education programmes. In approaching this task, we assumed that many of these decision-makers may not be experts in distance education, and therefore require a simple, understandable decision-making framework.

We did not see such a tool replacing detailed curriculum planning processes, many of which have already been documented in some detail. Rather, our focus was on creating a tool that provides a simple, relatively quick mechanism for enabling decision-makers to assess whether or not new or ongoing investments in specific distance education programmes are justified."

Response to the usefulness of the tool was positive and there was further discussion as to how the tool could most effectively provide support to promoting institutional quality. Much of the debate during the second week was around quality issues such as the difficulty in defining quality and increasing quality provision within higher education institutions. One participant commented:

Quality improvement necessitates effort, commitment and investment in terms of time, resources and cost. Being a shared responsibility of management and staff, quality assurance implementation requires active participation of all people, clear direction, strong leadership and serious commitment to continuous improvement.

During discussion a question was raised as to why UNESCO is involved in the quality assurance of higher education, and in particular distance higher education. The response from Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic, Team Leader, Higher Education Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base, UNESCO, Paris, was that:

"As an inter-governmental agency UNESCO's expertise and technical assistance are increasingly being sought out in these two areas. Reference was made to two recent UNESCO research papers: Higher Education in a Globalized Society and Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education..."

It was felt that more practical tools were needed for decision-makers, whether at governmental or institutional level, to provide some answers on what is quality in distance higher education



and what options to use. The project so far came up with regional databases with information on the subject. The databases are linked to a search tool on the main UNESCO site. In addition, a decision-support tool (DST) provides key questions related to QA of ODL."

Debate during the second week posed more questions than answers around issues of quality and how the DST could support the development of quality management systems. One suggestion was that the forum should be used to inform and establish a dialogue with external quality assurance groups in addition to looking at the Decision Support Tool for internal quality processes.

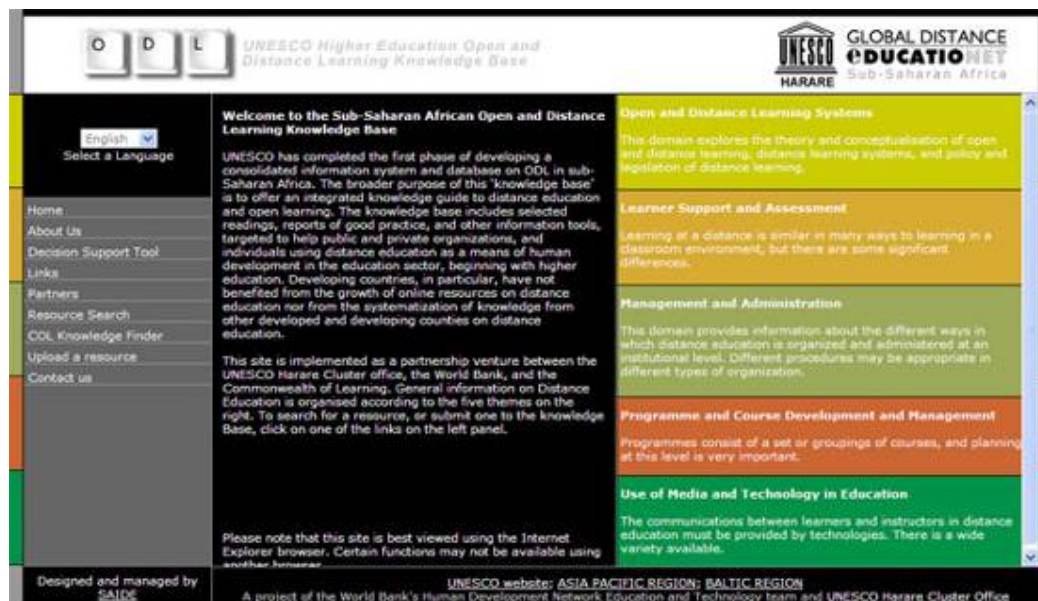
Conclusion

From the depths of engagement by participants it was clear that they believed that the discussion was worthwhile and important. Suggestions made during the Forum will serve to provide guidance to the team for future and continued developments of the database. In her closing remarks Dr Uvalic-Trumbic said:

"Within this larger framework, the discussions confirmed that the Higher Education Open and Distance Learning Knowledge Base adds value to widening access to quality higher education by providing decision-makers with better tools for informed decision-making."

Website: <http://www.africaodl.org>

Post Script: UNESCO's 3rd Global Forum will take place in South Africa in 2007. The Forum will provide an overview of UNESCO's activities in ODL over the last year with a particular focus on Learners and Learners' Needs. Details to follow.



Workshops Conducted by SAIDE in 2006

Introduction

SAIDE continues to provide information on workshops we have conducted during 2006. Maryla Bialobrzaska gives a brief overview of workshops she has recently held.

Workshop for the National University of Lesotho, Institute of Education staff on evaluating and adapting materials for use in the primary school teacher education programme planned for distance education delivery (14-15 March 2006).

Purpose: To assist staff of the B Ed programme at the Institute of Education to develop the necessary understanding of quality materials for distance delivery to plan materials development for the first year of the B Ed in Primary Teaching.

Key questions:

- What is the role of course materials in the curriculum of a distance programme for the training of primary school teachers?
- What are quality materials for distance education? How do you evaluate the suitability of materials for a particular purpose and target audience?
- What is involved in adapting existing materials?
- What are the options for provision of appropriate materials for a B Ed in Primary Teaching when time is limited?

Workshop for the Limpopo Department of Education, Khanyisa Support Programme on facilitating outcomes-based learning and teaching (27-28 March 2006)

Purpose: To build capacity of selected staff at Limpopo FET Colleges to train colleagues in an outcomes-based approach to learning and teaching.

Key questions:

- *How have educational contexts in South Africa changed?*
- *What are the implications for educators: How have educator roles changed?*
- *What are the principles of good planning?*
- *How to implement outcomes-based approach to lesson planning?*

The workshop also dealt with outcomes-based assessment, a range of learner centred teaching strategies and an activity-based approach to learning.



National University of Lesotho

News in Brief

Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa – TESSA Consortium

SAIDE is privileged to have recently become a member of the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) consortium. Other partners include the Open University (UK), the African Virtual University, and the University of Fort Hare. The project now works in nine African countries – Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia and South Africa – and aims to develop quality, web-based resources for use by primary school teachers in their classrooms, and by teacher educators in their primary school teacher training programmes. The idea is that the *open source* materials, available for free downloading from the Web, will be written in such a way as to be 'versioned' into any particular teaching or teacher education context in Africa. The consortium will, in various ways, support these local development processes. Up to now, SAIDE has helped with the writing of some of the classroom materials. In future, we look forward to playing a much bigger role in the consortium, as the consortium partner responsible for the development and authoring of the teacher educator materials. More information on the consortium and projects is available at www.tessaprogramme.org.

Announcement: ECD Fundamentals Materials

Over the past 9 months, the Zenex Foundation has made it possible for SAIDE, in collaboration with ECD partners, Woz'obona and COUNT, to produce training materials in the Fundamentals for Communications and Mathematical Literacy at NQF Level One. Many ECD practitioners, studying at Level One and Level Four, have experienced great difficulty getting access to learning in the fundamentals. Courses that do exist are usually both expensive and out of context for ECD practitioners.

The materials that we have developed are aimed specifically at ECD practitioners, giving them a contextualised learning experience. They are now available free as open source downloads from the Department of Education national education portal: <http://www.thutong.org.za>, under a Creative Commons licence.

In the next SAIDE newsletter, there will be a longer article describing the nature and purpose of the materials, their intended audience, and the open source conditions under which they are published.

NADEOSA Tenth Anniversary Conference - Deadline for Abstracts Extended to 31st May 2006

Celebrating 10 Years of NADEOSA: Exploring the Role of ICTs in Addressing Educational Needs: Identifying the Myths and Miracles.

NADEOSA would like to alert everyone that the deadline for submission of abstracts for this conference taking place on 23rd and 24th August 2006 has been extended to 31st May. We are also pleased to announce that with the support from AusAid, Professor Som Naidu will be one of our keynote speakers. Professor Naidu is currently Associate Professor of Educational Technology at the University of Melbourne. He is the editor of the journal *Distance Education* and the author of *Learning and Teaching with Technology: Principles and Practices*. London: Kogan Page, 2002. The current President of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia, Anne Forster, will accompany Professor Naidu to South Africa. Ms Forster is Manager Special Projects and Director of Innovation and Technology in Education Ventures at the University of Sydney. The President of the Commonwealth of Learning, Sir John Daniel has also agreed to address the NADEOSA conference.

- In order to ensure that this conference is a success we would like to urge all our readers to submit abstracts and register for the conference as soon as possible. We would also like to remind everyone to submit their courseware for the awards process.

