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From 6 th-8 th December, 2006, the Uganda Ministry of Education and Science and the Commonwealth of Learning co-hosted a National Consultative Forum on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Kampala, Uganda. Tony Mays was privileged to attend to make a presentation on cost-effectiveness in ODL and provides a brief overview of the Forum.

Strengthening ODFL Systems to Increase Education Access and Attainment for Young People in High HIV Prevalence SADC Countries

A recently launched, three-year study funded by the DFID-ESRC Joint Fund aims to increase access to education and learning for young people living in high HIV prevalence areas in Malawi and Lesotho, by developing a new, more flexible model of education that uses open, distance and flexible learning (ODFL) to complement and enrich conventional schooling. The principal researcher, Pat Pridmore elaborates:

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NADEOSA would like to announce that the Annual General Meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 5th September 2007 to coincide with a seminar on ***The Role of Open Learning and Distance Education in Addressing the Contextual Challenges for Education in Africa, Especially the Impact of HIV and AIDS.***



SAIDE's Director receives University of Pretoria Chancellor's Award

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SAIDE is proud to announce that on 23rd April 2007 our Director, Jennifer Glennie, received the Chancellor's medal for her contribution to education. We would like to share the citation with our newsletter readers.

"There can be little doubt that Jennifer Anne Glennie is the most recognizable international face of distance and open learning in South Africa today. Ms Glennie occupies senior leadership positions representing distance education within the statutory councils, universities, non-governmental organizations and a number of Africa-wide as well as other international bodies concerned with distance methodologies for spreading the benefits of education and training.

Ms Glennie is the Founding Director of the most influential national body concerned with distance education, the South African Institute for Distance Education (or SAIDE) in which organization she has served as Executive Director since 1993. Even earlier, Ms Glennie distinguished herself at the South African Committee for Higher Education (SACHED) and rose to various senior positions, including those of Deputy Director and Director of the SACHED Trust.

What sets Ms Glennie apart from her peers is not so much her solid achievements in building education and training as requirement of job; it is her broader influence in distance and open learning well beyond what might have been expected in employment. A few examples of her stellar leadership must suffice. In 1997 Ms Glennie played a leading role in the formation of the National Association of Distance Education Organizations of South Africa (NADEOSA), and has served as its Founding President and as Executive Member ever since. In the period 1997-2006, she had the further honour of being appointed by the Minister of Education to serve on the Board of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), a statutory body in which she also served as Deputy Chairperson and was instrumental in the formation of the first Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Ms Glennie has also served three terms on the Council of Africa's largest distance education institution in the country, the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Ms Glennie serves as South Africa's representative on the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning and as a member of the Steering Committee of the international Research Foundation of Open Learning (IRFOL). Jennifer Glennie also received one of the most prestigious awards in her field in 2002 – The Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning Award .

The Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria has been privileged to contract the services of Ms Glennie and the South African Institute for Distance Education to lead the evaluation and re-design of the full range of its distance education programmes.

It is an honour for the Faculty of Education to acknowledge Jennifer Anne Glennie as a remarkable South African educationist, and one worth of the Chancellor's Medal of the University of Pretoria."



ECD Content Strategy – Research



The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) was commissioned by the SABC to conduct research to inform the ECD Content Strategy. A research team from SAIDE, Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) and the University of Fort Hare completed the research. Sheila Drew provides an overview of the research project and its findings.

Research Objectives

The SABC identified the following objectives for the project:

- Identify current national policies and priorities for children and their families, including, but not limited to health, education and social development policies.
- Identify areas where SABC Education could provide programming support to raise awareness, deepen understanding of these priority areas by providing information/education to the target audiences through programming.
- Identify the programming priorities for the parent and caregiver audience taking into account approaches that are suited to South Africa .
- Identify issues that enhance and promote indigenous programming which supports the development of national identity, culture, language, history, heritage and values.
- Make recommendations that take into account the needs of children in different contexts (e.g. urban and rural contexts, hospitals, and prisons), and circumstances (e.g. children in single-parent families, orphans, etc) within a holistic approach, i.e.: the emotional, spiritual, mental, physical, cognitive, moral and social needs.
- Contribute to the growing knowledge base about educational broadcasting in South Africa for young children and their families.

SAIDE employed multiple qualitative methods in conducting this research and made use of the following research activities:

- a review of current national policies and priorities for children and their families;
- in-depth interviews with key government officers and others influential in the ECD field; key informants within organizations that work with children; parents and caregivers;
- generative in-depth interviews with organizations and individuals involved in networking and documenting resources and approaches in storytelling, indigenous plant knowledge and games;
- Focus groups interviews with representative groups of children, parents and caregivers.

Policy review

The policy review yielded suggestions for media intervention in three broad categories:

- Informational and promotional programming
- Supportive and educational programming
- Awareness programming.

[Click here](#) to view a detailed list of suggestions in the above categories.

Priorities

Interviews were conducted across a range of stakeholders to determine priorities. Interviewees included government officials, experts from universities, HSRC, UNICEF and ECD training agencies. In summary the major needs that emerged are:

- Support programming for children, particularly in the areas of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS), pre-Foundation Phase concepts and skills, and psychosocial support for dealing with stresses and problems related to family life, poverty and HIV.
- Support for parents in terms of access to information about poverty relief services, psychosocial support, the holistic development of young children at home and at school, and health and nutrition issues. In the process of this their self-worth as parents should be enhanced to better enable them to take on this role.
- Support for informal caregivers to help them provide a better standard of holistic care and development for young children
- Support for teachers both in community ECD sites and in the public schooling system. This would involve exposure to information and to education messages which may be the same as those for parents and caregivers. Particular focus areas include implementation of the NCS, suitable programmes for babies and toddlers, making equipment.
- Awareness and support for other care workers who interact with children, such as hospital and clinic staff (DSD), community health workers etc.

The overall priority is to give children, in particular, a voice by sending creative, consistent messages about the issues that affect them and their parents and caregivers. This is not an easy task. Any strategy should recognize where stakeholders and target groups are working together and succeeding, and highlight what is positive and what is possible. Together, the SABC and the various government departments need to find ways to encourage collaborative messages. The strategy also needs to continue to draw in broader civil society through a multi-media approach.

Post Script

Two aspects of the report were particularly interesting. The first was the research on Indigenous Knowledge, in [Chapter 3](#), which is a relatively uncharted area in ECD.

The second was [Chapter 4](#) which outlines other important issues around the way in which educational broadcasting is presented to children, and for that matter, their caregivers and parents. In addition, the focus for this chapter is around ideas about how children learn from educational broadcasting, and how educational broadcasting can be used most effectively to accommodate children across a range of learning contexts and learning styles.



Building Materials Development Capacity in FET Colleges in Limpopo – Impressions From an Internal Review

In 2005 the SAIDE Team was invited by the Limpopo Department of Education and the Khanyisa Support Project to build the capacity of lecturers in FET colleges in materials development. Christine Randell reports.

The overall aim was to assist lecturers to develop relevant [supplementary learning resources](#) that they could use to support the implementation of new learning programmes. It was hoped that this intervention would enable the colleges to become more responsive to the needs of the province and their learners and that the quality of learning and teaching would be improved.

In July 2006 we conducted an internal review of the impact of our capacity-building intervention. We attempted to find answers to four key questions:

1. How successful were we in building capacity in materials development within the FET colleges in Limpopo?
2. What materials development strategies have worked the best?
3. What level of involvement in materials development can usefully be implemented by educators at FET colleges?
4. What needs to be in place to embark on materials development initiatives in the future?

According to Kirkpatrick's ([Footnote 1](#)) model of evaluating training and development, we investigated the participants' reaction to the capacity-building activities and examined, albeit in a limited way, what they have learned. The evidence we gathered on both these levels shows that we have been successful in contributing to building a significant level of materials development competence amongst the group of some 30 participants who are representative of the seven colleges in the province. We can confidently say that there is a core team that collectively has enough practical experience and expertise, and that is sufficiently motivated to become involved in future learning resource development initiatives in the province. [Find out what we achieved in this project.](#)

The feeling of satisfaction at what we have achieved must be tempered with caution about the challenges that still exist. The real test of what we have achieved lies ahead when the participants have to transfer to others what they learned. For many facilitators and trainers this level represents the truest assessment of a programme's effectiveness. In my experience of facilitating similar capacity-building projects, there is often a post-intervention drop in motivation on the part of both the participants and the organizers. There seems to be a pervasive feeling that we have made the grade and that the trainees must get on with it. In our efforts to build sustainable capacity we have to resist this type of inertia and to make a conscious effort to harness the expertise and to strengthen it.

[Our findings and recommendations](#) offer useful information for anyone undertaking materials development initiatives in FET colleges and may also be of interest to those involved in such interventions in other education and training settings.



Opening New Frontiers for Equity and Quality Education Through Open and Distance Learning in Uganda

From 6th-8th December, 2006, the Uganda Ministry of Education and Science and the Commonwealth of Learning co-hosted a National Consultative Forum on Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in Kampala, Uganda. Tony Mays was privileged to attend to make a [presentation on cost-effectiveness](#) in ODL and provides a brief overview of the Forum.

The first day and a half of the Forum focused on inputs based on lessons of experience from within Uganda, within the region, within the continent and internationally. These preliminary sessions explored lessons of experience related to the following issues:

- the need to consider political support and legitimacy, policies, institutional capacity, sustainability
- challenges and innovations in ODL
- the integration of ICTs
- learner support, faculty development and quality assurance
- acknowledging and addressing the digital divide
- quality assurance
- costing and funding.

On the second day, participants were divided into small groups to explore key questions and issues, including:

- challenges that Uganda would face in seeking to expand and regulate ODL; and
- the policies needed to cope with the challenges.

Observations and Suggestions

A common observation among all the groups was the lack of resources, both financial, human and infrastructural. The groups noted that there is a lack of personnel with adequate understanding of ODL systems and a need for libraries, Internet access, and laboratories to support students.

The following additional observations and suggestions were raised:

Group 1: Does Uganda need ODL?

- Demand for educational opportunities is greater than the current supply, with the problem being exacerbated by geographical factors, resulting in high financial costs to learners in the form of travel and accommodation. Distance education provision provides an opportunity to limit these costs and allow students to work and learn at the same time.
- Distance education to economies of scale could help to reduce fees and result in a more optimal use of limited human resources.
- There is a need for an expansion of ODL provision, especially to address particular national needs such as health, engineering, vocational training and ICT development.
- Current practice is mostly mixed-mode delivery involving print-based materials and limited face-to-face contact.



- ODL is afforded a low status, limited advocacy; lack of resource materials; and high drop-out rates thought to be linked to low levels of motivation and lack of independent study skills.
- There is currently a tendency to use ODL as an income-generating initiative which militates against making the necessary investment in quality design and delivery.
- Additional policies are needed with regard to a national qualifications framework to establish equivalence, funding, accreditation and quality assurance, ICTs and Human Resource Development. There should be greater stakeholder participation in policy development and existing providers should be supported to improve quality.

Group 2: National policy on ODL

- There is currently a negative perception of ODL in Uganda and that steps needed to be taken towards achieving acceptance and legitimacy.
- There has been a lack of political will to support ODL which is reflected in a lack of institutional ODL policy. In developing an appropriate policy framework it would be necessary to try to balance the needs of the market and government priorities.

Group 3: ICT-related challenges

- There is a need to identify the country's ICT needs in a systematic fashion as the past has been characterized by inadequate planning based on limited information.
- The ICT infrastructure is generally inadequate and even where resources exist there is still often a need to find alternative energy supplies.
- Lack of readiness for ICT on the part of the students was noted.
- Currently experienced ICT personnel are spread too thinly and there is a critical shortage of knowledge and experience with regard to the integration of ICT and pedagogy.
- High start-up costs were also seen as a key challenge.
- Ways of addressing the challenges could include the development of an ICT policy appropriate to Uganda's current context, research into the possibilities of new technologies e.g. video to cell phones, greater collaboration at institutional and regional levels and a national drive towards demystifying ICTs.

Group 4: Institution-related issues

- There is often a lack of executive commitment at institutional level and that some ODL programmes had started as commercial initiatives and were effectively 'owned' only by those benefiting financially. A commitment to quality development of ODL would involve a moratorium on top-slicing of profits by management to provide for seed-funding for the development of facilities, human resources and quality materials.

Group 5: Financing, infrastructure needs and demands of ODL

- The perception that ODL is a route to failure and involves isolation from lecturers needs to be addressed.
- Currently students are often denied time off work to sit exams or to undertake practicals.
- There is a need for a demonstration of political will and a budget line for ODL at both national and institutional level.



- ODL students should be able access sponsorship and scholarships in the same way as contact students.
- The group made a plea for advocacy to draw in civil society and the development of policy in the area of open education resources.

Group 6: Quality Assurance

- The lack of appropriate human resources for ODL has often led to inappropriate people being involved in developing materials and curricula.
- External programmes that do not adequately address Uganda 's policies and challenges have been introduced in some instances to overcome gaps.
- There is a need to debate issues regarding entry requirements and whether enrolment should be based on qualifications and/or experience.
- The availability, accessibility and acceptability of ICTs needs to be addressed. However, even with limited access there have already been examples of ICTs being used inappropriately for the forging of certificates.
- A national set of minimum requirements for institutions to offer ODL needs to be established.
- Critical quality issues would be the development of appropriate curricula and materials and the appropriate assessment and evaluation of learners.
- At the policy level institutions and the Ministry should be involved in establishing norms for the recruitment and professional development of staff, the portability of credits gained by prior qualification and experience, and the verification and assessment of qualifications.
- A concerted process of awareness-raising regarding quality ODL and improved career guidance in the secondary and tertiary systems needs to be introduced.
- At national level it is necessary to consider subsidies, for example, to improve access to cheaper ICTs.
- At institutional level it is necessary to establish appropriate mechanisms for the assessment and evaluation of coursework and research reports submitted by ODL learners, and to clarify policy on entry requirements and degrees of 'openness'.

In concluding remarks on the Forum, the Ministry of Education and Science expressed its commitment to the development of a policy framework for ODL as part of a general drive to improve quality and access. The Director-General observed that the Ministry also supported a quick follow-up to the initial Forum so that the ideas discussed "should not gather dust on the shelf".

In planning a way forward at the end of the Forum, the following key steps were agreed:

- establishment of a working group
- setting of a timeframe
- clarification of objectives
- development of detailed funding proposals, and a follow-up workshop to review progress and maintain momentum.



Strengthening ODFL Systems to Increase Education Access and Attainment for Young People in High HIV Prevalence SADC Countries



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Current efforts to accelerate the education sector response to HIV and AIDS in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mainly focus on how to shore-up the education system and continue 'business as usual' in the face of the challenges presented. However, a powerful argument has been made that this approach is unlikely to succeed in high prevalence countries and that new models of schooling will need to be developed for vulnerable young people who may not be able to attend school regularly

ODFL initiatives, structures and networks that are already in place to implement HIV and AIDS policies will firstly be identified through analyses of secondary data. Case studies will then be developed in contrasting communities severely affected by HIV and AIDS to identify contextual factors that can lead to exclusion from conventional schooling and dropping out. The case studies will be complemented by data collected using a range of approaches such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, informal discussions with family members, participatory activities and observation. Based on this formative research, a pilot intervention will then be made through secondary schools to identify and trial a small-scale ODFL intervention package designed to overcome the barriers to conventional schooling identified in the case studies. The intervention will be evaluated qualitatively and also quantitatively using an experimental design.

This study will be led by researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London working in partnership with researchers at the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), the Institute of Education, National University of Lesotho and the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT), University of Malawi.

It is envisaged that this study will create new knowledge and increase understanding of how ODFL can address barriers to educational access and achievement and increase the knowledge skills and empowerment of HIV-affected young people. It will also contribute to increased research capacity in the participating countries.

For more information about this project please visit the website: www.ioe.ac.uk/odfl.

The project will be formally launched at a seminar held in conjunction with the AGM of the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA). If you are interested in attending please complete the [attached application form](#).

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NADEOSA would like to announce that the Annual General Meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 5th September 2007 to coincide with a seminar on ***The Role of Open Learning and Distance Education in Addressing the Contextual Challenges for Education in Africa, Especially the Impact of HIV and AIDS.***

The annual general meeting will take place at the University of South Africa, Florida Campus from 10:00 until 11:30, after which the seminar will start. [Click here](#) to download the seminar registration form. To read more about the project that will be launched by the research team at the seminar [click here](#).

