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The review was divided into three parts. Part One suggested a framework for the analysis of the distinctive character of academic learning and the promise of ICTs in this regard. To achieve this, two seminal texts, namely Diana Laurillard's *Rethinking University Teaching* and the University of Athabasca's *Theory and Practice of Online Learning* provided us with a framework within which to raise important questions about the relationship between the structures of hypertext and those of learning. Based on this framework, the review examined both global and African trends regarding the use of ICTs in the universities, with particular attention to debates concerning cultural relevance of computer-based learning environments in African contexts.

Part Two of the review dealt with factors influencing the use and non-use of ICTs in higher education institutions. It started with general issues that pertain to all educational situations, then focused in particular on higher education institutions, proceeding from a consideration of issues in developed and developing countries contexts, and finally on the situation in African universities. The question of specific barriers to accessing computer-based learning environments in higher education institutions in developing countries was also explored.

Besides reflecting on what extant literature has to say about the specifics of use and non-use of ICTs in higher education institutions in South Africa, Part Three of the review examined the South African higher education policy environment and the consequences of recent institutional mergers for capacity and expertise related to ICT-based higher learning in the country.

The fourth and final part of the review considered the use of ICTs in the teaching and learning of the social sciences, and speculated on the apparent dearth of research and writing in this area. This section also interrogated the question of the distinctive character of knowledge, teaching and learning in the academic context, paying attention to the social sciences. Suggestions for analysis and future research were put forward.



The North West FET College Sector - Developing a Blueprint for Transformation

During the second half of 2005 the North West (NW) Provincial Department of Education embarked on a transformation project of its Further Education and Training Colleges. The purpose was to prepare the colleges to meet new challenges posed by Government, the Department, existing legislation, requirements of commerce and industry and expectations of the students. It is intended that this project will articulate with other transformation initiatives at a provincial and national level such as the FET College Recapitalisation Plan and interventions by external agencies such as DANIDA. Maryla Bialobrzaska elaborates.

Background

SAIDE, together with thirteen other organisations worked in a consortium to conduct initial research to collect information on the current situation in the three NW colleges (Thirteen campuses/sites). SAIDE's brief was to focus on curriculum transformation and quality assurance pertaining to teaching and learning. Other organisations investigated areas such as student support services, infrastructure and resources, staffing, management information systems, and governance structures. Once an overall analysis of the current situation was completed, the findings were used to inform the development of the strategic and operational plans needed to produce a comprehensive blueprint for the turn-around strategy.

The curriculum transformation component of this project highlighted the need to significantly increase the numbers of learners at FET Colleges and contribute substantively to a pool of suitably-qualified individuals in the economy. Besides increasing throughput numbers and relevance of education and training, quality of delivery needs to be assured.

Findings

The research showed that there is currently a significant disjuncture between the reality on the ground and policy requirements and best practice criteria. The existing policy vision is of a responsive FET system and a curriculum that addresses the socio-economic needs of the North West province. However, conclusions from our fieldwork showed that the NW FET Colleges were unable currently to implement this vision. The Colleges also fall short of meeting benchmarks provided by research into international best practice.

Recommendations

SAIDE has recommended a programme and qualification mix (PQM) that focuses on providing high quality, flexible and responsive programmes and learning opportunities to a range of learners (including out-of-school, at risk and unemployed youth, and adults) and offering livelihoods opportunities in line with the province's socio-economic needs. All programmes included in the PQM integrate tradable skills along with essential cognitive skills. Key to the curriculum transformation process is the recommendation that a first year Foundation Programme be instituted, which gradually broadens and deepens in successive years. The one year programme will serve to expand the potential learner base, thus creating new education markets for the Colleges. Central to learner success will be learner academic support, especially for those who might otherwise be excluded from developing livelihood opportunities.

The programmes of the PQM have been selected and prioritized in terms of responsiveness to socio-economic needs of the NW province and have been located at specific sites. Selection of campus/es has been influenced by strategic planning Colleges have conducted themselves, as well as by recapitalization plans and provincial socio-economic planning.

To realize this vision, extensive staff capacity-building and training for re-deployment will be required. Further, policy will need to be revised to afford Colleges greater autonomy to act responsively and flexibly in terms of capacity-building needs. Professional development of staff will ensure that staff capacity is developed systematically and relevantly, for effective design and delivery of the transformed curricula and programmes.



Distance Education Policy-Making: Part One

From 23rd to 27th January, 2006, SAIDE hosted a workshop on policy development for distance education practitioners. The workshop was part of a three-month, largely online course organised by the Southern African Regional Distance Education Centre (SARDEC) and run by SAIDE. Tony Mays, the course leader, provides an outline of the course.

The SARDEC online course has been designed to help policy-makers identify critical areas in which policy needs to be developed or adapted in order to create an enabling environment for distance education that will encourage good practice and discourage bad practice. The course comprises three parts: a series of pre-workshop activities mediated and discussed by email; a week-long contact workshop; and a series of post-workshop activities mediated and discussed by email. The course was made available to participants on CD-Rom and online via the SAIDE website. It consists of an introduction, a course outline, course outcomes, activities and a selection of resources related to distance education, change management and policy formation.

Workshop

The workshop was structured in two parts. The first part explored a case study to identify policy issues at institutional and national levels. The second part of the workshop involved a more intensive discussion of policy needs with respect to particular distance education challenges: student needs; staffing needs; systems requirements; the inter-related nature of tuition, assessment and learner support policies; and the sometimes vexed issue of retention, throughput and funding.

Six of thirteen participants on the programme managed to attend the workshop and enriched the discussions that took place from perspectives of experience in Botswana , Lesotho , Tanzania , Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Way Forward

In reflection on how to take the process forward, it was clear that most participants saw policy development as a process rather than an event and one that would call for wider consultation as illustrated in the following response:

- *Conduct consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders such as distance education institutions, Ministries of Education and Training (MoET) inspectorate;*
- *Form task forces on distance education policy formulation;*
- *Present first draft to stakeholders;*
- *Refine and present to senior management of MoET.*

Overall, the workshop was seen as an essential component of the course and participants left having committed themselves to deadlines of 30 April 2006 for the completion of the four post-workshop activities and discussions. By the end of the course, it should be possible to discuss some examples of actual policy formation emerging in the region. Hence, the fact that this report is headed – Part One.



SchoolNet SA: Partners in Learning

SchoolNet SA and Microsoft are working together to bring South African teachers high quality professional development programmes under Microsoft's **Partners in Learning** initiative. Gerald Roos, a consultant to SchoolNet, presents an overview of the programme.

Partners in Learning is an international initiative supporting ICT in education in a variety of ways including access, support, content development, curriculum development and teacher development in a number of ways depending on each country's context of needs.

SchoolNet SA has become known for providing innovative educator development programmes in the field ICT integration. The Educators' Network is a well-established distance learning programme developed in cooperation with SAIDE and SCOPE (South African-Finnish Co-operation Programme in the Education Sector). Intel has an agreement with SchoolNet to provide services related to its internationally renowned *Teach to the Future* programme. It is in this context that Microsoft approached SchoolNet to develop resources and deliver training for its *Partners in Learning* initiative.

Basic ICT Skills for Teachers

Basic ICT Skills for Teachers introduces new users to ICT in the context of their needs as teachers. Based on the assumption that teachers are adult learners the programme engages teachers in learning that satisfies their needs and interests. Teachers work at their own pace and style in a facilitated environment. A key feature of the programme is the rich context for teachers based on 30 scenarios that outline typical teacher uses of ICT. These range in complexity and include several applications.

The training model is based on the Cognitive Apprenticeship model. Facilitators are trained to constantly monitor participants as they grow in confidence and they respond by adapting their approach from one of modelling to one of coaching before giving the participant-teacher freedom to explore new skills in less-facilitated environments. The intended outcome is to develop a greater sense of independent learning amongst teachers using ICT.

This flexible approach has been very well-received by teachers. The initial evaluation report concludes that there has been a "dramatic increase in self-reported skills ratings following training". 98% of participating teachers indicated that they enjoyed the approach to training and that their training had improved, with trainers concluding similarly.

Additional Programmes

Since developing the basic skills materials SchoolNet has developed additional programmes for *Partners in Learning*. These include a course on WebQuests which represents an introduction to curriculum integration. This facilitator-led course aims to help teachers find, evaluate and adapt WebQuests for classroom use. Course materials include 32 WebQuests covering eight themes relating to the South African curriculum. The course is designed in modules that could be presented as separate two-to-three hour workshops.

ICT Leadership for Education Managers is intended for school principals and provincial education management. It has a similar modular design, making it possible for institutions to customize programmes according the needs and availability of participants.

A Student Helpdesk manual completes the initial complement of teacher development materials. The CD has been translated into French and Portuguese and is a core component of teacher development in the *Partners in Learning* initiative for West, East and Central Africa.



Workshops in 2005 and 2006

Continuing from our previous issue of the newsletter, SAIDE provides an outline of some of the workshops that we have run in the last six months.

Workshop for Maths Centre for Professional Teachers (MCPT) staff on Materials Development (31 August – 2 September 2005, Ian Moll & Sheila Drew)

Purpose:

To provide writers of materials for activity-based learning courses:

- with the knowledge and skills to design materials in the light of sound education practice;
- with an opportunity to practise the writing of interactive educational text; and
- with an understanding of the planning process required for development of materials.

Key questions:

- How do designed learning materials help to structure a course and provide a learning pathway for tutors to follow?
- How does one design and develop learning materials with respect to their appropriateness for the target group, interactivity, logical flow and coherence, and accessibility?
- What criteria does one use to judge good and bad learning materials?
- How does one evaluate one's own progress in materials writing?

Workshops for staff at the University of the Free State on developing suitable learning resources. (2-4 November 2006 and 25-27 January 2006, Christine Randell)

Aims:

- To develop a common understanding of the features of good learning materials as a basis for reviewing and developing learning materials;
- To reflect on diverse resource-based learning methods that can be used with students to promote effective learning;
- To discuss and engage with the planning process required to develop good learning materials.

Intended Outcomes:

The participants will be able to:

- Engage critically with selected learning texts to identify the embedded learning pathways;
- Use nationally accepted criteria to review learning materials and suggest how they might be improved;
- Prepare the outline of a selected learning unit using a planning template;
- Begin the development of a specified learning resource, or
- Evaluate and refine an existing learning resource.



Pursuant to the above the participants will have:

- Deeper comprehension of what happens when we learn;
- Awareness of the range of methods available to encourage active learning behaviour;
- Deeper insight into the use of various learning resources and strategies to encourage conceptual development;
- Realization of the implications for teaching and learning when using learning resources;
- Understanding of the need for a systematic approach to the development of learning materials.

Key questions:

Critical issues in the development and evaluation of learning materials:

- What is active learning? What formats for learning text facilitate/hinder active learning?
- What is deep learning? What ways of using prescribed texts encourage/discourage deep learning?
- What do we have to do differently in future?

[Presentation: Developing Learning Materials](#)

[Presentation: Examples of Learning Resources](#)



A sad farewell to two SAIDE Colleagues

Irene Broekmann

SAIDE mourns the passing of Irene Broekmann on 12th August 2005. She worked with us as a consultant on a number of materials development and evaluation projects over the past four years, becoming a valued member of the broader SAIDE education team. Her tragic death came just as we went to press with *Being a Vocational Educator*, of which she was co-author. At her funeral, Irene was remembered as follows (in words from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*):

"The effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who have lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs"

When at SAIDE, Irene contributed enormously to the development of the rest of us, in ways never called for by her contracts and strict job descriptions. That is what we miss most about her.



Feziwe Mrubata

It is with great sadness that SAIDE reports the sudden passing of Feziwe Mrubata, our morning receptionist, in early December 2005. Fezi started with us as a trainee library clerk in October 1999, having received a library qualification from the University of the Western Cape. Having been a switchboard operator at her university residence, when SAIDE urgently required switchboard relief we asked Fezi if she would stand in for us, which she willingly agreed to. This eventually became a permanent position. Fezi was a fitness fanatic – she ran both the Two Oceans and Comrades in 2005 and before she fell ill would run up twelve flights of stairs every morning to our offices. SAIDE staff will fondly remember Fezi as an *early bird*, quietly-spoken, but fun-loving and a health fanatic. Fezi will be sorely missed.



NADEOSA Courseware Awards 2006

Are you proud of your distance education courseware? NADEOSA, the National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa, offers you the opportunity to gain recognition for the excellence of your institution's courseware through its Biennial Courseware Award for quality distance education, instituted in 2000. The purpose of the awards is to recognise and value excellence and creativity in teaching, learning and assessment in open and distance contexts.

The theme for the 2006 awards is pedagogical innovation whether in teaching, assessment, learner support or the use of educational technology. There are three categories: print-based courseware, e-courseware and multimedia courseware. When applying for one of the awards, the institution should submit the relevant material (guides, assessment, textbooks, CD ROMs, websites, etc.) as well as a written reflection on the courseware that includes a description of how the individual course/ module fits into the total programme.

The assessment criteria relate to the theme of pedagogical innovation in open and distance learning. Assessors will come from the two institutions that won awards in 2004: the University of South Africa and the University of Fort Hare.

So take a look at your courseware today and select the best for submission to the NADEOSA Biennial Courseware Award. For further information, visit the NADEOSA website – www.nadeosa.org.za or contact the secretariat: Jenny Louw on (011)403-2813.

Don't you just hate it when ...

A document contains an *Executive Summary* that has nothing remotely "executive" about it and which is actually just a summary? Everybody seems to do it nowadays – universities, governments, businesses, NGOs. But just because the World Bank or the Bernard van Leer Foundation or the NGO on the 3rd Floor in Braamfontein does it, does not mean that we need "Executive Summaries" to pop up everywhere, surely? What does the term actually mean? First, it could mean a summary written by an Executive Committee. Fine. Second, it could mean a summary written for the consideration of an Executive Committee. Fine again. Maybe it means a summary of the things that need to be executed? This we'll concede too. But the problem is that there are very few executive summaries around that seem to be doing any of these things. They seem just to be summaries, good or bad. Yet they're called "executive summaries"? Does this work a bit like executive automobiles, in the sense that a BMW or a Mercedes or a Jag or an Executive Summary gives a certain status to the Man or the company? If so, would the term "summary" not be enough for the likes of you or me? - *Ian Moll, SAIDE.*

(Editor: We would like to encourage debate or contributions to our *Don't you hate it when...series*. Please send responses to jennyl@saide.org.za.)

