NEWSLETTER
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SAIDE
South African Institute for Distance Education

Being a teacher in the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic

LEARNING GUIDE

HEAIDS | Development Cooperation Ireland | DFID | SAIDE

Self-instructional Materials on HIV/AIDS for Teacher Education Programmes

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Online Access and Connectivity of Primary School Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa

During 2005 the Open University (UK) commissioned SAIDE to undertake a desktop study aimed at informing the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) project Consortium of current and potential future (2005-2010) access of primary teachers to online resources. The study focused on South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria. Eunice Ivala and Ephraim Siluma-Mmekoa summarize the findings.

Thutong: The South African Education Portal

In early 2003, the Department of Education released a tender to build a national education portal. The Thutong portal is the realization of a key objective of the Department of Education's 2001 Strategy for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in that promised to introduce ICT successfully to schools and to use technology to make a host of curriculum and support material available to South African educators. A consortium led by SAIDE won the bid to develop this portal on behalf of the Department.

Since then the Thutong portal has grown in leaps and bounds and currently boasts well over 10 000 registered users and over 17 000 captured curriculum resources! Janet Stewart provides an update on the project.

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SAIDE Workshops: Materials Development for FET Educators

Christine Randell provides an overview of two materials development workshops held in Limpopo for educators in FET colleges. Links are made to resources developed for the workshop

Benefits of Using an Activity Guide

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News in Brief - [Remembering Dr Prem Naidoo of the HEQC](#)

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A core module on HIV/AIDS is required in **all** pre- and in-service professional teacher education qualifications up to NQF Level 6. It specifies the **minimum** competences to be achieved by all qualifying educators across all phases of schooling and all learning areas.

The materials SAIDE has prepared consist of a Learning Guide and a Reader.

The Learning Guide has four units, each representing 12 to 20 hours of study, designed around four questions:

• *What do we need to know about HIV and AIDS?*

Unit One deals with the basic biological and medical facts about HIV and AIDS, and how to select and mediate these facts for different learners.

• *Why are HIV and AIDS part of our lives?*

Unit Two is about the socio-economic aspects of HIV and AIDS – why it is most prevalent in Southern Africa , gender issues in the spread of HIV and AIDS, stigma and discrimination.

• *What are HIV and AIDS doing to us in our school communities?*

Unit Three covers the impact of HIV and AIDS on the teaching profession, on individual teachers, and on learners.

• *What can we do about HIV and AIDS in our classrooms and school communities?*

This is the most practical of the units and provides teachers with guidance on providing emotional support for learners, organising practice care for vulnerable learners, and educating the school community about HIV and AIDS.

Throughout, the material is related to the school and classroom, and the key activities in each unit require school-related work.
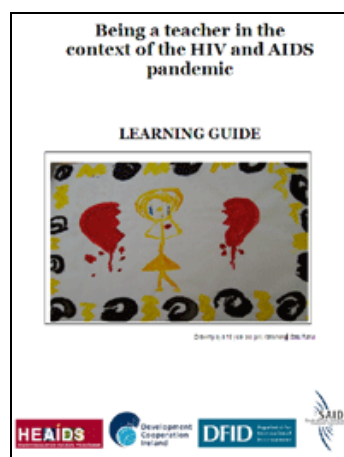
The Learning Guide and the Reader work together – in each unit there is reference to more than one Reading , usually with an activity to guide student engagement with the Reading . However, the Reader can also be used independently – see the Contents page.

The Learning Guide is designed for independent learning (self-instruction)as the introduction explains:

> The learning approach in this module follows a learning cycle in which activities are central. You probably know quite a lot already about HIV and AIDS, and we would like to build on that knowledge through activities that ask you to think about what you know in a different way, or do a task that gives you an experience that you have not yet had. But, in order to learn from an activity, you need to think about what you have learned. So we try to help with that process by discussing or commenting on the activity. If you are using the materials in a contact session, then conversation with your lecturers and your classmates will help as well. But as you explore further, you not only learn new things, you also have more questions, and it is these questions that frame the next activity. The cycle (or, if you like, the spiral) is repeated:
>
> o   Content to frame activity
> o   An activity
> o   Comment on the activity (not answers, but a discussion of the issues that have arisen through the activity)
> o   Reflection on what has been learned from the activity - new knowledge
> o   Next activity.
>
> Finally, at the end of a number of cycles, the end of the unit is reached – by which time you will have had a chance to achieve the outcomes set at the outset of the unit.
>
> Each unit has a key assessment task that will help you to draw together the learning through all the activities in the unit. Your lecturer may or may not decide to use this key assessment task for formal assessment purposes.

The materials will be piloted as part of UNISA's NPDE programme in 2006.

Other institutions who may wish to pilot the materials are welcome to contact the HEAIDS programme director at HESA:

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Online Access and Connectivity of Primary School Teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa

During 2005 the Open University(UK) commissioned SAIDE to undertake a desktop study aimed at informing the TESSA (Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa) project Consortium of current and potential future (2005-2010) access of primary teachers to online resources. The study focused on South Africa , Tanzania , Kenya and Nigeria . Eunice Ivala and Ephraim Siluma-Mmekoa summarize the findings.

Access to ICT in Sub-Saharan Africa
The study found that access to the new information and communication technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa is generally at a very early stage of development compared to other regions of the world. In the broadcasting arena, radio, followed by television, remains the most accessible media on the African continent.

Africa is experiencing a rapid growth in mobile technology but such growth is not evident in the penetration of fixed land lines. At the end of 2003, there were 6.1 mobile phones for every 100 inhabitants in Africa, compared with three fixed-line subscribers per 100 inhabitants.

It is estimated that there were 615 million computers in the world in 2002 and that 30 % of these were in developing countries. Access to personal computers (PCs), however, is lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Paul Budde Communications Pty Ltd, by early-2004, overall Internet penetration in Africa was around 1.5 %.

The research within the four countries concluded that there is limited access to ICT in schools, teacher training colleges and universities. In Kenya and Tanzania, computers and Internet access are non-existent in primary schools, with the exception of some high-cost private schools. A few teacher training colleges have Internet connectivity. In the universities, there are too few computers to serve the student population. However, availability of ICT in South African higher education is far greater than in the other countries the research concluded.

Various initiatives are putting computers and Internet in schools such as the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) e-School project which, while still in its infancy, has placed computers in 90 schools across 15 countries. However, the dominant scenario remains lack of access to any form of ICT in the school environment.

Although there are no statistics showing primary school teachers' access to ICT, it can be assumed that some teachers do have access to ICT through Internet cybercafés, schools, community centres, universities, for example.

The study also showed that computer technology remains the primary means of accessing the Internet in educational institutions. There was no evidence of use of mobile technology to access the Internet. However case studies from Kenya and South Africa report the use of SMS for communication between student teachers and lecturers.

The governments of the four countries in the study have all developed ICT policies, however only South Africa has developed a policy specifically related to use of ICT in education.

Barriers to Accessing ICT
Some of the barriers for access to ICT in education are:

- limited infrastructure,
- lack of competent manpower,
- high cost of hardware, software and connectivity,
- lack of awareness of appropriate use of technology in education,
- apathy towards use of technology in education among academics.

Possibilities for Increased Access to ICT
Three possible, but linked sets of scenarios for accessing digital resources at African schools are suggested:
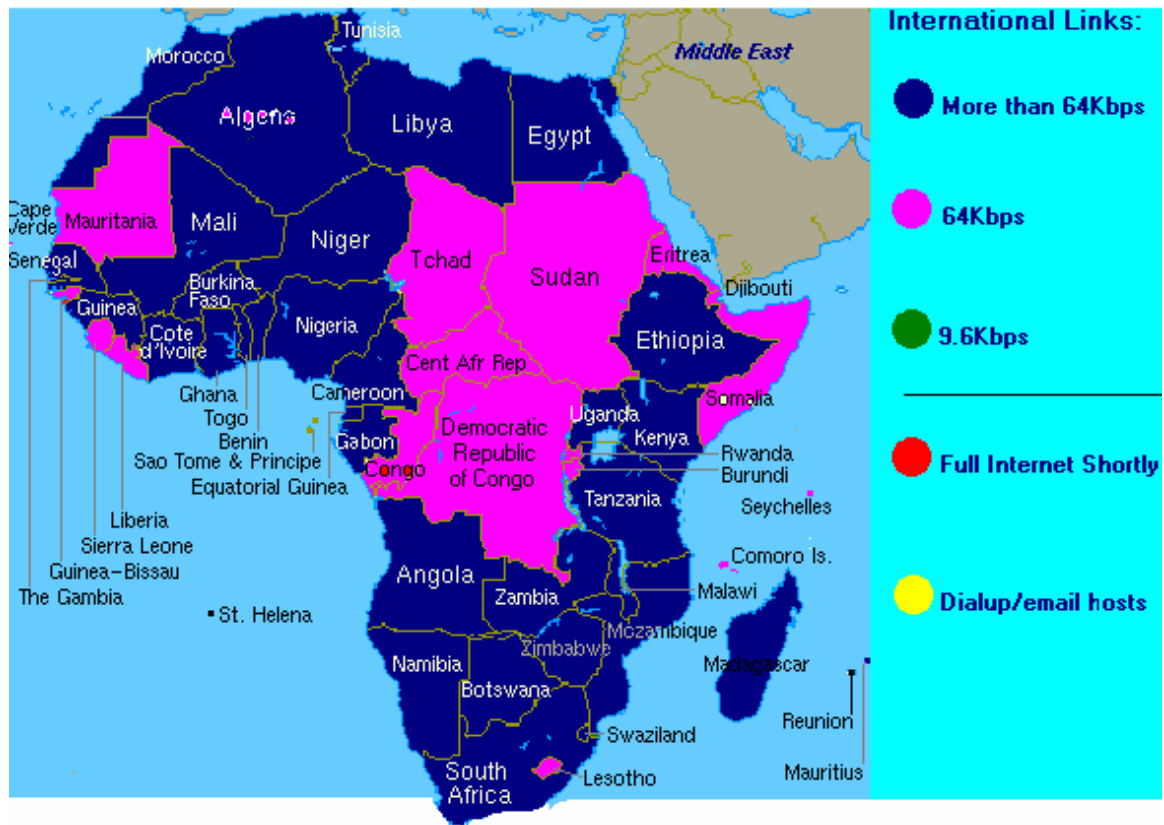
- **A single computer –** Where the best option of distributing content is likely to be CD-ROM.
- **A PC mini-cluster –** Where distribution of content is likeley to be the most effective. However, data-casting is a possible alternative form of content distribution.
- **A computer laboratory –** This remains the dominent model for providing learners with access to ICT. Distribution of content is through the Internet. However, Internet access speed remaiins a constraint as many of these projects have not been able to afford to roll-out meaningful broadband connectivity. Once again data-casting is an alternative form of content distribution.

Across all three scenarios the use of SMS on mobile devices to alert teachers to teaching and learning resources available is an interesting and workable possibility.

A recommendation would be to identify parallel projects that might be focusing on roll-out of ICT infrastructure and developing closer working relationships with these projects in order to ensure that access to technologies develops in parallel with production of new digital content.

The full report is available at www.saide.org.za

Internet Access & International Bandwidth

Thutong: The South African Education Portal

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Key Achievements To Date:
Usability Testing
The first round of usability tests on Thutong was completed in April 2005. The usability tests took place at schools in the Gauteng Region. The schools used were representative of schools across South Africa, including government-subsidized, primary, high, rural, and urban and township schools. Although the response to Thutong was extremely positive, many users found the registration confusing and the homepage cluttered. A new landing page with simple clear instructions has since been launched resulting in a noticeable increase in the number of registered users in the system.

The second round of usability testing will begin in mid-2006. Important features of usability are:

- Effectiveness - how well the user achieves the goals they set out to achieve using the website.
- Efficiency - the resources consumed in order to achieve their goals.
- Satisfaction - how the user feels about their use of the website.

The purpose of each test is to understand the usefulness of Thutong for South African educators. Results derived from the tests provide constructive feedback from real users and are/will be used to make continual improvements to Thutong.

Content Partnerships
Thutong has established a vast network of unique content partners with NGOs, government departments and private organizations. These relationships represent the beginning of a long-term strategy to maintain the portal in a cost-effective manner. Relationships with publishers

such as MacMillan, Cambridge University Press and Easy Maths are changing the paradigm of how content is released into the public domain.

Building partnerships with projects like this will open enormous opportunities to expand the reach of Thutong into Africa and to contain the costs of ongoing maintenance.

Resource Acquisition
Thutong has formed new relationships with official news providers, departments of education and organizations active in the education arena ensuring that news of, and from, the South African education community is available to all. Ongoing gathering of news, policy, school administration and management, as well as research resources ensures that a minimum of 100 new items with all associated meta-data are added to the national portal every month.

Resource Workflow
The Resource Workflow Tool facilitates efficient resource quality control procedures for all resources added to the Knowledge Matrix. It makes use of a version control system which allows only one user to edit a resource at the same time. Currently the five steps for this workflow include the following: data capturing, checking for duplicates and unsuitable content, tagging by a specialist, proof reading and lastly, a manager performs a final role of quality checking the resource and tagging and publishing it on the Portal.

Communication Tools
A vital strength of the Portal is its capacity to support a range of communication strategies, especially easy, asynchronous communication between educator and learner, amongst educators, and amongst learners. The portal thereby acts as a facilitator and opens significant new opportunities for learners to engage with educators and support changing roles for educators. Several discussion lists are fully functional and available on Thutong.

Conclusion
The development and maintenance of a national education portal has been a challenging and complex undertaking. It has tackled a wide range of aspects of the education system, and demanded simultaneous management and integration of many different information requirements.

Resource acquisition has formed the backbone of the National Education Portal to date, and offers a database containing a selection of reviewed education-related resources and web sites. This content has been categorized according to focus and has been reviewed by South African educators, resource specialists, and/or educational administrators. Continuing this process is crucial in order to maintain a steady flow of resource acquisition.

The Portal's biggest achievement to date is the vast amount of expertise and knowledge gained. We continue to accumulate a wealth of knowledge unique to the local context, making it relevant to the day-to-day lives of each and every South African. We hope that this work continues to make a positive contribution to improving the quality and impact of education delivery in South Africa . Thutong is available at: http://www.thutong.org.za.

Reviewing Roles and Functions of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)

In July 2005 SAIDE and the International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL) were commissioned to review the current roles and functions of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) and to make recommendations for possible future roles for NAMCOL. Ephraim Mmekoa (SAIDE) and Terry Ellsop (IRFOL) conducted the review. Ephraim Mmekoa reports.

Why the review?

Established in 1997 to provide learning opportunities for adults and out-of-school youth, NAMCOL has principally focused on offering alternative secondary education (ASE) and a second chance to thousands of learners who fail to proceed to Grades 11 and 12 in the formal senior secondary schooling system. In 2003 a World Bank report[1] argued that the alternative secondary schooling offered by NAMCOL was not cost effective. A recommendation made in the subsequent Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan (ETSIP)[2] was that the Government of Namibia should rather expand the formal senior secondary schooling to accommodate large numbers of learners. This recommendation would clearly have implications for NAMCOL, thus necessitating this review to inform future direction.

What the review found

Most informants appreciated NAMCOL as an institution that provided a second chance to learners who otherwise would not have been catered for in the formal senior secondary schooling system. Other positive comments included accessibility, affordability, good study materials and good support for learners.

However, many of the same informants raised concerns about NAMCOL and the entire education system in Namibia , which fairly or unfairly created negative perceptions of NAMCOL within the Namibian public. These included:

- Inadequate provision of early childhood development (ECD) which resulted in many learners starting school un/under prepared;
- Poor provision for ongoing teacher development which means that teachers were not always up-to-date with new developments in education and new teaching methods;
- Policy of non-repetition which resulted in learners being promoted even when they were actually not ready for the next grade.
- Shortage of classrooms at the senior secondary level (Grade 11 and 12).

The implementation of *Education for All* resolutions in Namibia has resulted in a massive increase of learners entering the education system which is the main cause of classroom shortages. As a result NAMCOL has become the primary institution admitting learners who could not get the required 23 points to proceed to Grade 11 in the formal schooling system. Ironically, this emerged as the main reason that people have developed a negative attitude towards NAMCOL. Some argued that NAMCOL was admitting young learners of 15 and 16 years of age who should actually be in the formal schooling system and that NAMCOL was not appropriate for young learners.

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[1] Morape M T. Namibia Human Capital and Knowledge Development for Economic Growth: African Region Human Development, Working Paper Series – No 84. The World Bank.

[2] The Strategic Plan for education and training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP): 2005-2020, Windhoek , February 2005 –document not published yet

Not withstanding these concerns our analysis of registration patterns and reports at NAMCOL showed that in reality about 75% of learners registered with NAMCOL are between ages of 20-29. These are learners who should not be in a formal schooling system anyway. Secondly, despite concerns that NAMCOL was not appropriate for young learners, we found that NAMCOL learners were performing adequately. In 2004, 88% of Grade 10 and 75% of Grade 12 learners at NAMCOL passed the examinations in the subjects for which they sat.

Nevertheless, it was clear from the research that NAMCOL management and the Government of Namibia needed to develop a strategy to improve the image of college.

Conclusion
In conclusion, the review has supported the idea that NAMCOL should diversify its programme offerings. The report recommended that NAMCOL should continue offering an alternative secondary education programme as it is expected that there will be an increased demand in future years. A further recommendation was that NAMCOL should offer a range of vocational programmes in preparation for the world of work. In order for NAMCOL to successfully provide other programmes it will need to strengthen its own capacity and will need to do careful costing for each of the courses chosen.

SAIDE Workshops: Materials Development for FET Educators

Christine Randell provides an overview of two materials development workshops held in Limpopo for educators in FET colleges.

Workshop for the FET Materials Development Team in Limpopo on developing an activity guide for the FET Business Administration Learning Programme (Level 2) (5-9 September 2005, Christine Randell)

Intended outcomes

By the end of this training intervention, we will have:

- Developed an activity guide for the business administration topics as identified in a draft learning programme for Business Administration, Level 2;
- Developed an activity guide for the information systems topics as identified in a draft learning programme for Business Adminstration, Level 2;
- Compiled guidelines to develop activity guides for vocational learning programmes.

Pursuant to the above, we will have:

- Reached consensus on what we mean by an activity guide;
- Arrived at a good understanding of how activity guides can be used with learners and what the implications are for training educators to use them;
- Achieved a sound understanding of what to include in activity guides and how to compile them.

Workshop for the FET Materials Development Team in Limpopo on instructional design editing to refine the Activity Guide (28 – 30 November 2005, Christine Randell)

Intended outcomes

By the end of this training intervention, we will have:

- Improved selected sections of the draft activity guide (Business Administration Level 2) through an instructional design editing process;
- Identified gaps and additional activities that still need to be developed;
- Prepared some guidelines for learners and educators on the use of the activity guide;
- Compiled an action plan to take forward the completion of the activity guide.

Pursuant to the above, we will have:

- Increased our understanding of what constitutes good learning activities;
- Reached a better understanding of how an activity guide can be used with learners in FET colleges;
- Achieved a practical understanding of the instructional design process required to develop good learning materials;
- Strengthened the instructional design editing skills of individual participants and the core group as a whole.

Benefits of Using Activity Guides

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

We learn by doing
Learning activities are at the heart of the learning and teaching process and the focus on activities rather than on content helps to emphasize the development of competence. The link between outcomes, assessment criteria and learning activities can easily be established.

Flexible and versatile learning resource
Information abounds and content will keep on changing. It is simple to slot in new activities and create new themes without having to redevelop the whole guide. The activity guide can grow from a core set of activities to a comprehensive coverage of key learning outcomes.

Link a variety of resources
Activities can be developed in such a way that learners have to consult a range of learning resources in order to complete them. This creates a rich learning experience. The activity guide is the spine that links the various learning resources.

Encourage students to play an active role in their own learning
Our students have to learn to engage with a variety of resources as this is a vital skill for coping in a technological and fast changing world. Careful attention must be paid to develop scaffolded activities that gradually nudge students to grow as self-directed learners. Spaces are provided for students to record their responses to the various activities. The activity guide can thus double-up as a learning journal which enables learners to see how they are progressing.

Staff development resource
Educators have to get used to harnessing different resources to create relevant and stimulating learning environments. The activity guide can be used to train educators to move away from the comfort of teacher-directed and content-focused teaching to outcomes based facilitation of learning in which the students are encouraged to play an active role. The activities in the guide serve as exemplars that give educators practical ideas of how they might stimulate active engagement.

Increased likelihood for educators to develop activity guides
We discovered that it was possible to develop the learning guide within a relatively short time in terms of materials development time frames. In a series of short workshops the participants were able to acquire basic materials design skills that enabled them to develop suitable learning activities, short introductory sections and a feedback section.

Limpopo FET Materials Development Team

Obituary: Dr Prem Naidoo of the Higher Education Quality Committee

It is with great sadness that SAIDE learnt of Prem Naidoo's untimely death in February 2006.

Over the last few years many of us at SAIDE have had the privilege, and pleasure, of engaging with Prem in his various capacities at the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). We enjoyed his infectious enthusiasm, his huge energy, his keen intellect and his high principles. Prem never stood still: there was always a new challenge to be met; taken-for-granted truths to be interrogated; different understandings to be explored; and another new idea of how to improve the quality of higher education to be executed.

A key dimension of Prem was that so many of these ideas were so carefully implemented. We salute in particular the manner in which he oversaw the HEQC's response to the issues of quality in distance education that SAIDE had highlighted in its 2004 report to the CHE.

South Africa is a poorer place without Prem. May his memory continue to inspire us.

Jenny Glennie