

DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING IN AFRICA (DETA) 5TH – 8TH AUGUST 2007 CONFERENCE

Summary of the conference

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PARTICIPANTS

- Total number of 150 participants:
- Coming from 23 countries

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SPEECHES & PRESENTATIONS

- 4 keynote speeches:
- A series of presentations covering pertinent issues in teacher education
 - *Addressing the quality and numbers of teachers* by Hon. Prof Geoffrey Lungwangwa Minister of Education, Zambia
 - *An Overview of UNESCO's initiative on teacher training in Sub Saharan Africa* by Caroline Pontefract and Awol Endris
 - *Open Educational Resources: An African Perspective* by Peter Bateman
 - *Teacher Education policy in Africa – purpose and fact* by Prof. Jide Owalabi

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ISSUES EMPHASIZED BY MOST SPEAKERS & PRESENTERS

- There is an acute shortage of teachers at all levels of education and this is due many reasons including:
 - Poor conditions of service including low salaries
 - Sickness and illness especially HIV/AIDS
 - Training programmes and strategies that do not keep up with the need
- Quality of teachers in Africa is still a challenge because of:
 - Low entry requirements
 - Low morale and motivation
 - Poor working conditions
- There is enormous increase in the number of children entering and requiring school education

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- Teacher education and training must take into account the changing needs and demands on the teachers and adequately prepare teachers for this changing role
- Teacher factor in education cannot be overlooked or sidelined
- Africa must explore a variety of strategies and approaches of providing education and training teachers so as to cope with the demands and challenges . This could include among others: collaborative ventures, integration of distance education, exploring the potentials of OERs

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SOLUTIONS FOR CHALLENGES

- Challenges faced demand commitment from all (governments, teacher education institutions, partners...)
- Need strategies that are cost effective
- Distance education a viable option that needs to be explored and should be integrated into all current strategies
- Governments must be committed to the use of distance education and this can would be visible from amount of resources allocated to distance education
- Policies should be put in place to take care of: recruitment, training, conditions of service, supervision and support; and retirement
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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY

- Teachers are very central to any education system
- All over Africa, teachers shortage and quality are a challenge
- This is partly because of the poor salary and conditions of service for teachers; poor entry qualifications;
- Teacher education and training must take into account the changing needs and demands on the teachers and adequately prepare teachers for this changing role

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1

- Many nations in Africa are grappling with a host of challenges e.g. Poverty, post-war conflicts,
- Education is a viable option to these challenges
- Teacher factor in education cannot be overlooked or sidelined
- To achieve MDGs, EFA goals, Africa must address issues of access, equity, and quality of education

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AREAS OF CONCERN IN TEACHER EDUCATION

- Many countries are employing more and more unqualified and under qualified teachers
- There is a low number of female teachers in the teaching force – but there must be balanced handling of gender issues in education
- The teacher education curricula leave a lot to be desired – there have been criticisms that the curriculum has failed to produce the much needed multi-skilled teachers

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM UNESCO TISSA

- UNESCO along with all its departments and Institutes is committed to quality education
- IICBA is a UNESCO Institute with a mandate to work on Teacher Education issues
- UNESCO has had a variety of initiatives meant to help countries work towards quality education and quality teacher education
- UNESCO is committed to working with nations at macro level, but the challenges are much more than the resources it has at its disposal
- TISSA has been initiated in response to challenges teacher education continues to face
- Training of teachers is important but may not be sufficient if it is not accompanied by other interventions

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MODELS OF PROVIDING TEACHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

- There are a variety of models being used
 - Length of training programmes
 - Entry requirements
 - Types of colleges
 - Management structures
- All training models have a number of challenges including: inadequate funding, ensuring quality and attracting the right candidates

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HIGHLIGHTS ON OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER)

- This is a relatively new movement – it is based on the assumption that none of us owns knowledge
- But OERs is itself an old concept e.g. earlier versions of the bible
- Type of OERs can be in a variety including complete courses, modules, streamed videos, audio clips ...
- Benefits of generating common knowledge are various therefore OERs have a huge potential that TE can explore
- Working collaboratively can have a host of benefits

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EXAMPLES OF OERS

- WikiEducator & FLOSS4Edu: Vision is to provide appropriate educational content and tools. Hope is that the expert groups will develop a host of open educational resources
- African Virtual University: Is developing learning materials for secondary school teachers – Science, maths & ICT
- Teacher Education in Sub Saharan Africa (TESSA): Is helping teachers create a pedagogic toolkit through the development of learning materials for primary school teacher
- South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE): Strategy includes: inter-institutional network, sharing of existing materials, ensuring quality through peer review,

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TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY IN AFRICA – PURPOSE AND IMPACT

- Quality of teachers related to the entry qualification of teacher trainees. Need policies that articulate
- Teaching is used as a stepping stone to other professions. Need policies that will make teaching attractive
- Teacher training programmes in Africa are not able to prepare all the teachers needed yet the number retiring, dying, ill... Are nearly the same number trained!
- Teacher disengagement – should teachers have a fixed age of retirement?

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GATS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

- Services have taken over goods as a major trade sector
- Modes of supply of services: Cross border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, presence of natural persons – e.g. Professors working abroad
- There has been increasing transnational higher education in Africa
- A huge number of experts from developing countries move to the North (Africans group with the highest educated in USA!)
- There has also been increased mobility of students and staff but are our institutions adequately preparing students for this?

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EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN AFRICA

- Shared experience on research that has been done in the TESSA project on - Teachers' lives
- Research in Education trends in India
 - TE policy and strategy
 - TE curriculum
 - Use of technology
 - New roles of the teachers
 - Networking and collaboration
- Africa has the least research output
- African research should be **about** and **for** development – **and there is urgency**
- A lot of areas of research still needed

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PARALLEL SESSIONS

- Participants had opportunity to focus on specific areas through the parallel sessions and these were:
 - Teaching large classes
 - Teaching values
 - The language barriers
 - Maths and Science Education
 - Gender Issues
 - The use of ICTs in education
 - Education management

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CONCLUSIONS

- The teacher is central to education and the preparation, training, recruitment, retention, and development of the teacher must be closely examined and planned for.
- Collaboration and networking in teacher education is vital and must be promoted
- A lot more research is still required and the feedback loop into the TE curriculum and training of teachers must be established
- Agreed upon a research agenda that institutions and nations can pursue

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Do you want your child to become a teacher?
- If you want your child to become a teacher, does your child want to become a teacher?
- Is there hope that things can change so that more children can have interest in teaching?
- What can you and I do to achieve this?