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

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

ISSUES EMPHASIZED BY MOST SPEAKERS & PRESENTERS
- There is an acute shortage of teachers at all levels of education and this is due to 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

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

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 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
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

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

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

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

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

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
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.

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?

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.

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

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.
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?