REVIEW OF THE USE OF ODL IN BOTSWANA

Since our last meeting at Lilongwe, Malawi in 2008, ODL initiatives have resulted in impressive developments due to support received from the Botswana Government and Commonwealth of Learning. ODL is being delivered right across Botswana by both public and private institutions.

The public institutions that deliver education through the ODL mode are: the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), the University of Botswana’s Centre for Continuing Education which has made plans to utilise e-learning platform, and the Francistown Technical and Vocational College, though to a very limited extent. BOCODOL delivers school equivalency programmes, certificate programmes in the Vocational, Management and Professional areas. It also delivers diploma and degree programmes in partnership with a number of reputable universities for example, the Zimbabwe Open University, IGNOU, Amity University and the Leeds Metropolitan University. The IGNOU and Amity programmes are delivered using the Tele-education platform. There are a number of private ODL providers including cross-border institutions. All institutions providing programmes through ODL are regulated by government through the following two regulators; Botswana Training Authority for all certificate level programmes and the Tertiary Education Council for all diploma and degree programmes.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has, over the years, provided support through the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE). The COL support for capacity building has resulted in ODL practitioners being trained from Certificate level to the Masters Degree Level, that is: Certificate in Distance Education for Practitioners (CDEP); Practitioner Research Evaluation and Skills Training (PREST); Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education and Master of Arts in Distance Education. Other capacity building initiatives have been carried out through workshops, seminars and conferences. Notable developments include research and publication workshops that have enabled novice researchers to also publish in a peer reviewed SADC-CDE/DEASA International Journal of Open and Distance Learning; development of OERs for secondary education level, development of audio and video learning
materials, online learner support leading to the piloting of supporting learning through mobile technology especially SMS. Further COL has, in conjunction, with UNICEF initiated the possibility of training teachers for Integrated Early Childhood Education (Development) through the ODL mode and ensuring that the child friendly schools approach is adopted and utilised across the country.

ODL in Botswana is being used to deliver the following programmes:
- school equivalency at secondary education level
- tertiary programmes that include, diplomas, undergraduate and senior degrees
- Teacher education programmes to upgrade primary school teachers from being certificate holders to diploma holders.

Radio is being used on a weekly basis to support school equivalency programmes.

TOP PRIORITIES

- Development towards establishing an Open University
- Finalising the National ODL Policy and National Qualifications Framework
- Striving for BOCODOL to be recognised as a centre of specialisation in ODL capacity building in the SADC region
- Consolidation of Networking, Collaboration and Partnership in the area of ODL
- Diversification of programmes offered through ODL at Tertiary Level

WHAT COL CAN DO TO FURTHER SUPPORT BOTSWANA’S NATIONAL ODL AGENDA

COL can assist by its continued support through the SADC-CDE and inviting ODL practitioners to participate in its activities regionally and internationally. COL could further support Botswana in the identification and procurement of experts to facilitate capacity building in the following areas:

1. Provision of basic education i.e. equivalency of primary school level to out of school children, youths and adults in very remote settlements, farms and in wildlife management areas
2. Training Technical and Vocational teachers to become ODL practitioners in order to develop and deliver technical and vocational programmes
3. Funding for capacity building in skills development, entrepreneurship for the improvement of livelihoods through agricultural education initiatives and health education promotion through ODL.