

Teacher training delivers with STAMP 2000 +



Practical as well as theoretical courses ensure that both the "what" and the "how" are learned



EDUCATION IS A NECESSARY characteristic of human capital. But who is educating our educators? Today's global environment increasingly emphasises and employs technology in every aspect, including the area of education. The role of the teacher and of the educational administrator is transforming from primary knowledge provider to a more supportive role, but education professionals still need to be good at their jobs. This implies a sufficient level of skill and knowledge, accompanied by periodic upgrading, to keep up to speed with current developments.

The Commonwealth reality does not quite match with this ideal scenario; there are disparities in areas such as Southern Africa, where educational providers today need greater access to quality training and upgrading than has been available in the past. This Commonwealth need was identified as far back as 1994 at the Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers (CCEM) in Islamabad, Pakistan, and more recently at the 1997 CCEM in Gaborone, Botswana. Recognising the issue's timeliness, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and six Southern African countries agreed to collaborate

on a five-year distance education project to train upper primary and junior secondary teachers and administrators. The six original signatories, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, were later joined by Mozambique and Zambia on the project. All eight countries are also members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), an organisation for co-operative effort toward common goals.

With the catchy acronym of STAMP 2000+, the Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM) Programme provides in-service skills training and upgrading for STM teachers in participating countries. COL and education ministry representatives from the signatory countries held a strategic meeting in 1998 to formulate a long-term work plan. Workshops were held to design a core regional curriculum compatible with SADC educational practice, to streamline the adaptation of STAMP 2000+ modules while keeping open the longer-term possibility of the programme's implementation in other SADC countries. As the co-ordinating agency, COL allocated significant start-up and administrative funding for the programme. Most hosting, staffing and other ongoing costs continue to be provided by participating countries.

STM subject areas aside, the modular courses in STAMP 2000+ also focus on general education and multi-grade teaching topics such as special educational needs, educational management and curriculum design. The modules were designed to be sufficiently generic to adapt to the specific needs of existing in-country teacher training programmes. The 18 general education modules are scheduled for publication by the end of this year, while 27 additional specialised STM topic modules are slated for publication in March 2001. STAMP 2000+ is self-consciously cost-effective; it is a distance learning programme, which means that teachers can study while on the job with minimal disruption to the human resource base. Practical as well as theoretical courses ensure that both the "what" and the "how" are learned. The programme is user-friendly, as the modules contain very little jargon. Self-assessment, evaluative and interactive

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and meetings came from international sources such as the British Council (Botswana and Zambia offices), the Open University (UK), Northern College (Scotland), CfBT Education Services (UK), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the South Africa College for Teacher Education, the Netherlands government (Zimbabwe office), the British Department for International Development (Zimbabwe office) and Grant MacEwan College.

There are no programme graduates yet, but STAMP 2000+ is already a proven capacity builder. Close to 300 education professionals, including administrative and technical staff, have received hands-on training related to instructional



design, course writing and management. The fact that this initiative is on schedule is a testament to the

programme's success as a collaborative effort. By focussing on teacher training, STAMP 2000+ has laid the groundwork for a highly skilled and responsive education system for Southern Africa.

— Grace Chin

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learning techniques are built in. The specific mode of delivery, however, will depend on each country's available infrastructure and training needs.

The modules were written by seven regional and in-country teams through a series of regional meetings and workshops, co-ordinated by COL through education ministry representatives from all participating countries. Content input, review and the securing of copyright has been a collective responsibility. Canadian organisations, such as British Columbia's Open Learning Agency and Alberta's Grant MacEwan College have provided instructional design input. Other consultants have conducted third-party reviews of the material. Additional funding and personnel for workshops