

BOTSWANA

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

Botswana has been an active member country and partner with COL in the promotion of open and distance learning (ODL). A small state of the Commonwealth, Botswana has one of the most dynamic economies in the region but one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world.

SUMMARY

The period 2003-2006 has been one of significant activity. Being a member of the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative, Botswana is positioning itself as a provider of learning content amongst Commonwealth countries. The country has been active in supporting the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA). Following an agreement between the Government of Botswana and COL, the Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) was established and hosted by the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL). Delegates from Botswana have participated in a number of capacity-building activities within Africa and in other parts of the world in support of the expansion of ODL and eLearning in the country.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Botswana is participating in the development of open educational resources for VUSSC (see Pan-Commonwealth initiatives section for more details of VUSSC). This work started with a three week “boot camp” in Mauritius in August 2006, during which four teams created learning materials, using existing open educational resources as inputs. Approximately thirty notional learning hours in each of the subject areas of tourism and entrepreneurship were produced in Mauritius and the work will now be continued online. All materials will be made available online via a website.

Working in Partnership with COL and regional partners

Botswana delegates participated in an East African Consultation for COL's Three-Year Plan (2006-2009), which was held in September 2004. Recommendations from this consultation were used in the development of the COL's Three-year Plan for 2006-2009.

Botswana hosted the Forum on Open Schooling for Secondary Education in October 2004 to raise awareness and to advocate for the establishment of open schools in the Sub-Saharan region. Ten African countries were represented at the meeting. International experts were also invited to be resource persons.

This was followed in July 2006 by an Open School Consortium for Southern Africa also held in Botswana.

Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)

COL and the Minister of Education, Botswana, agreed to the establishment of a regional centre to support SADC countries develop their ODL systems. Originally set up as the Southern African Regional Distance Education Centre (SARDEC) it was later brought into the ambit of the Southern African Development Community and has changed its name to SADC-Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE). A Memorandum of Agreement between COL and the Ministry of Education Botswana was signed in June 2004. The SADC Ministers are being informed of the development of the Centre.

A COL specialist met with groups of management and staff at BOCODOL in May 2005 to investigate, advise and provide orientation to help the Centre set up their knowledge management platform and get their knowledge resources established. The Centre is now beginning to function and is planning to host seminars.

Following SADC-CDE's establishment in June 2005, it embarked on a project identification process that culminated in its work plan for the next twelve months. SADC-CDE visited 25 distance education institutions in seven countries. The information collected is adequate to inform implementation of some projects and the remaining six countries will be visited at a later date.

The first Board Meeting of SADC-CDE was held in Botswana on 29 November 2005. The meeting was attended by representatives from Swaziland, Zambia, Lesotho and Botswana. Two of the activities that SADC-CDE have identified as being important and in which they would like to facilitate workshops are:

- Quality distance education – to develop a regional protocol in quality assurance, and
- Build ODL research capacity in the region.

Preparation and use of learning materials

COL and University of South Africa organised a BA in ODL Writers Workshop from 28 November to 5 December 2004. Two participants from Botswana attended the workshop. The workshop aims were to:

- Finalise course outlines of second year modules;
- Reflect on challenges experienced with the development of first-year courses;

- Workshop difficult aspects of the development process, such as designing activities and introducing audio, etc. as a supportive medium;
- Agree to a timeline; and
- Write, review and finalise unit frameworks.

Botswana participated in a Quality Assurance in Teacher Education Roundtable that was held in India in March 2003. The document and proceedings of the roundtable have been published. The publication entitled “Innovations in Teacher Education: International Practices of Quality Assurance” was released. Also in November, a Workshop on Quality Indicators in Teacher Education was organised from 5-7 November. International participants included one from Botswana.

Botswana is one of the eight Southern African countries who have agreed to collaborate with COL on a five-year distance education project to train upper primary and junior secondary teachers and administrators in Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM). The programme, STAMP 2000+, provides in-service skills training and upgrading for STM teachers. In addition to the STM subject areas, 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 are self-instructional teacher materials and are designed to be sufficiently generic to adapt to the specific needs of each participating country.

The Increasing Access to Secondary School Level Education through the production of Quality Learning Materials was initiated at a meeting organised by COL, which was attended by senior Ministry of Education officials and heads of distance education institutions from a number of Sub-Saharan countries in the Commonwealth. Through the project, ODL materials on English, Mathematics and Science at the junior secondary school level were produced. Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique are partners in this initiative. The materials on English and Science are completed and the materials on Mathematics are at the piloting stage.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COL co-sponsored the Africa Copyright Conference attended by delegates from Botswana, which was held in Kampala from 28-30 November 2005.

Delegates from Botswana attended the “International Literacy and Livelihoods Experts Meeting: Learning for Life in a Changing World”, which was held in Vancouver on 15-17 November 2004. Approximately 30 international experts participated in the meeting.

Senior administrators from the University of Botswana and the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning attended the fourth and fifth “Managing Change, Leadership and Strategic Change in Higher Education – a strategic development programme for leaders of Commonwealth Universities in Africa” Conference in Scotland from 17-22 August 2003 and from 8-13 August 2004.

One delegate from Botswana participated in the workshop on eLearning in July 2004, organised by the University of Melbourne for Science and Mathematics teacher educators from sub-Saharan Africa. The three-day workshop gave an exposure to various eLearning possibilities to the participants.

COL sponsored four delegates from Botswana to participate in COL's 3rd Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Dunedin, New Zealand from 4-8 July 2004.

Two participants from Botswana attended the Management Development Institute in Singapore (October 2003). These institutes, organised by COL in partnership with the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs (October 2003) and the Indian National Council for Educational Research and Training (February 2004), were designed to benefit teacher training college principals and senior administrators from Sub-Saharan Africa.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2003-2006 Botswana has made considerable progress in enhancing its domestic ODL systems as well as acting as a leader in the Sub-Saharan region. In 2006-2009 it will build on this work to extend existing initiatives. For example, SADC-CDE, hosted by BOCODOL will continue to develop capacity in ODL and help to establish new open schools in the sub-region.