



COUNTRY PRESENTATION – LESOTHO

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Background

Pursuant to the National Vision 2020 which, inter alia, commits the country to the following objectives; Education as central to national development and provision of an adequate basic Education to all Basotho as a key development goal, Lesotho, like most developing countries has embraced open and distance learning (ODL) as a strategy to extend education access to all levels of Education and Training.

Following the establishment of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre in 1974 as a pioneer in the provision of open and distance learning, there has been a steady increase in the number of ODL providers and a widened range of programmes on offer in the country. A collaborative network of ODL institutions exists through the National Association of Open and Distance Education of Lesotho (NAODEL). At the regional level the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) provides a framework for cooperation and collaboration in terms of material development, programme development, sharing of resources and general capacity building for national associations and membership.

At the Apex of these developments is the Government initiative through the Ministry of Education and Training, to develop policy for ODL in Lesotho. Accordingly, the first draft of the Lesotho Open and Distance Learning Policy was completed in January 2008. In a nutshell, the draft is intended to guide and support the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of ODL programmes in Lesotho. It is hoped that the draft document will undergo all the necessary steps within a reasonable period before the final stage of enactment this year.

Top Priorities

Within the context of COL commitment to focus on Education, learning for livelihood and the Human Environment, Lesotho has identified the following areas as top priorities for COL support.

1. Capacity Building for ODL

- Instructional Materials development
- Training of Writers and Editors
- Capacity building in research and how to use Open Educational Resources (OERs) e.g. Wiki Educator and others
- Management of ODL Institutions

Modalities for implementing these listed items could include training workshops, staff attachments, educational visits, seminars and any other appropriate means.

2. Increased Access to ODL Websites and Applicable terms and conditions for such Accessibility

- COL is specifically requested to give guidelines as to ways and means of accessing such websites, including a full list, subject areas covered and institutions concerned.

3. Provision of Pan Commonwealth Quality Indicators to the Country as promised under Education, item one on the Country Action Plan 2006-2009

4. Teacher Development (Item 3 under Education)

- Provision of materials development by Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa TESSA is considered crucial for policy support and capacity building for teachers; hence our high expectation for it.

5. Learning for Livelihoods Skills Development

- COL's expertise in this area will be most welcome as we explore the use of ODL in the promotion of indigenous knowledge, technical and vocational education and training for learning and livelihoods.

COL's Role in Furthering Lesotho's Agenda

As Lesotho's involvement in ODL initiatives is at a critical stage of resource mobilisation, infrastructural development and capacity building, COL should play a helping hand in terms of financial provisions, personnel exchanges, sharing of materials and general capacity building. Local initiatives on staff development should be supported as strongly as possible to enhance their impact.