SAMOA

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Key Challenges and Opportunities

1. Development and maintenance of infrastructures to enable use and access to the appropriate technology for open and distance education (ODE).
2. Building capacity for materials development and supporting students learning.
3. Development of an appropriate policy for ODE.

Use of ODL in Samoa

Policies:

- Samoa is yet to develop a policy for e-learning. Reference to the need for ODE to enable TVET to be available to as wide a clientele base as possible is made in the Samoa Strategic Policies and Plan 2006-2015. In fact, ODE or distance and flexible learning (DFL) mode with policy support could include and broaden all levels of education in Samoa.

- The Strategic Plan (2010-2020) for the National University of Samoa has also made a commitment to the development of DFL at NUS in order to increase access by all people of Samoa to the NUS courses and programmes.

- The National ICT Plan (2012-2017) has one of its major goals (Goal 3) to "… strengthen ICT human resources and increase human resource development opportunities through the use of ICT." Proposed strategies to achieve this include: (i) ensuring schools and universities have affordable and sustainable access to computers and broadband connections; (ii) integrating the use of ICT into school curricula; (iii) ensuring teachers receive appropriate training so that they have the skills and confidence to incorporate the use of ICT into lessons; (iv) supporting e-Learning programmes for vocational and 'lifelong education' opportunities for youth and adults to develop updated and relevant skills needed to be competitive in the current workforce; and (v) making opportunities available to people in rural or disadvantaged communities to acquire the skills and confidence to use ICT to access and share information and further their education.

Teacher Education:

- Samoa recently launched its National Teacher Development Framework (NTDF) which brings together all policies to do with teacher education (pre-service and in-service) as well as the professional standards for teachers and leadership teachers, the institutional framework for the registration, appraisal, quality assurance of teachers and for the negotiating of salaries and conditions of work to enable fair and just remuneration. However, legislation to enforce the framework is being prepared.

- The use of ICT in education is a major part of pre-service teacher education. Currently all pre-service teacher education students take an introductory course in computer basics and computer applications. Pre-service bachelor and diploma programs include minors and majors in Computing for those intending to teach Computer studies in secondary schools. Pedagogy courses in Computing are now offered to diploma and bachelor of education students for secondary schools with a new computer literacy course planned to be offered to all primary pre-service teacher education students in 2015. Training for in-service in the use of SchoolNet resources have also taken place. However, much work remains to be done for in-service and the professional development of teachers.

Infrastructure:

- The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture is committed to the development of SchoolNet in primary as well as secondary schools in line with its commitment to improve the use of technology in education in the schools in the next five years.

- The NUS needs to improve its infrastructure particularly its bandwidth to enable more effective online teaching, learning and connectivity with its students.

- Broadband and wireless internet connections are readily available in Samoa, however the costs need to be negotiated down to enable institutions, schools and all educational users to have access.

- A significant infrastructure development is the recent establishment of the Samoa National Broadband Highway (SNBH) which connects all government ministries, schools and hospitals. Such connectivity has the potential to facilitate ODL, collaboration, communication and data sharing amongst schools.

- Promoting partnerships in ICT is considered an advantage to share costs for affordability especially for those in rural areas.

- Issues of maintenance and sustainability are real.

Content

- Samoa has participated in the VUSSC enterprise since its inception.

- Academic and teaching staff members have contributed to course content for VUSSC courses and received training at each of the VUSSC bootcamps. Samoa has been represented on each of the bootcamps. A total of nine (9) people, mainly academic and teaching staff members have been team leaders in the bootcamps and have gained the experience of developing materials and content on line. This expertise must now be utilized by Samoa through NUS.

- Content from VUSSC training workshops has been used to develop new courses and supplement existing courses. Examples include the content for the Environmental Science Programme and the Diploma of Agriculture Programme. Skills and knowledge in the use of ICT – in developing courses as well as the collaborative approach involving the VUSSC members has strengthened the course development capabilities amongst a large number of staff members at NUS in different faculties. COL supported training in wiki educator for education personnel at NUS, the Ministry of Education, TVET institutions, schools and colleges and has also supported the development of IT skills as well as knowledge in the use of Open Educational Resources, i.e., accessing and evaluating other available content on the net.

- Under the SchoolNet project, teachers have been trained in the use of electronic resources for use in their subject areas.

Top Priorities

1. Development of appropriate ODL policy for Samoa.
2. Developing and maintaining the infrastructures such as SNBH and SchoolNet to reach all schools and securing sustainable connectivity.
3. Building capacity to produce both online and offline materials which are affordable or free.
4. Support e-Learning programmes for vocational and 'lifelong education' opportunities for youth and adults to develop updated and relevant skills needed to be competitive in the current workforce.
5. Creating a support unit which can provide pedagogical as well as technical support to teachers using ICT in the delivery of curriculum. Development of core modules and training for teacher use of ICTs for teaching and student learning. In the Health sciences, the use of online methods for delivery of courses in biomedical sciences and specialty areas such as Pathology, Radiology, Forensics, community health development, Pharmacology, Psychology for Nursing are a priority.

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