Resources File

The readings for this module appear in the following order below:

1   Akhter, Z. 2003 'Muslim women and open learning: a selection of case studies from Bangladesh' *OSAC Journal Of Open Schooling 2*: November-January

2   Fentiman, A. 2003 SOMDEL: *Somali Distance Education Literacy Programme (Macallinka Raddiya)*, report prepared for Africa Educational Trust by the International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL), Cambridge: IRFOL. N.B. Photographs from the original report have been removed from this copy.

3   Hamilton, D. 1996 *Finding a voice in academic writing*, at http://www.pedag.umu.se/personal/hamilton_d/voice020228.pdf

4   Kane, E. 1995 *Seeing for yourself: research handbook for girls' education in Africa*, Washington: Economic Development Institute, World Bank (extract 'Counting' pp 252)

5   Kunje, D. 2002 'The Malawi integrated in-service teacher education programme: an experiment with mixed-mode training' *International Journal of Educational Development* 22, 3-4: 305-320. © 2002, reprinted with permission from Elsevier.

6   Latchem, C. 2003 *The case for and feasibility of introducing open and distance education into a Nyanu Teachers' College*, a fictional Executive Summary produced by the author for the International Research Foundation for Open Learning

7   Latchem, C. 2003 *Three forms of reporting*, learning activity produced by the author for the International Research Foundation for Open Learning

8   Naidu, S. 2004 'Research, scholarship and publishing in distance education', paper presented to *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning 2004*, Dunedin, New Zealand, 4-8th July

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WOMEN AND OPEN LEARNING:
A SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES FROM BANGLADESH

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to examine the role that open and distance learning plays in providing access to secondary education for women in Bangladesh. Open schooling provides a flexible and adaptable approach to learning that is compatible with the cultural roles and responsibilities that often restrict and constrain females from continuing secondary education. Education statistics show that there is a significant decline in the number of females enrolled from primary to secondary school (UNESCO, 2000). Primary net enrolment ratio - girls 83% and boys 80%. Here gender gap is 3%. Secondary gross enrolment ratio is boys - 56% and girls - 52%. Here gender gap is 4%. (Sources: Statistical Yearbook 1999). Reasons for this are many and include poverty, early marriage, ill health, pregnancy, and cultural constraints on female education.

The case for formal education is well documented. Education is seen as an indispensable agent to bring about a qualitative change between what we are and what we want to be. In this context the role of distance education is not an option but an unavoidable imperative for many of us (Dhanarajan, 1996). It has been demonstrated categorically in a wide range of studies that an informed and educated mother can cater for the health and nutritional requirements of the child in a much better way than an uneducated mother can.

The significant impact that education has on women and their households is well documented. It has been shown that educated mothers are able to contribute more efficiently to enhance the quality of their children's education. (Raj, 1982; Chaudry, 1995). What makes the task of educating women potentially more difficult is that illiteracy is concentrated in countries with low per capita income. Poverty and illiteracy

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in general are positively correlated. The poor can ill afford to forego current earnings in favor of education that may possibly lead to higher income later on. In the case of girls from poor households, the choice is even clearer. Given the social construction of gender roles, boys will be given preference over girls in matters of education. Especially since after marriage, women leave to join their husbands' families and, hence are not regarded as being useful to their own families in the long term (Lunnborg, 1994). When resources are limited and opportunity costs are high, the girl is doubly condemned. The second factor that works more directly against education for women is the dominant social code in some parts of the region that prohibits intermixing of the sexes.

Societies often impose physical restrictions on women's mobility. Studies from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have clearly shown that parents refrain from sending their daughters to school not so much because they fear for their daughter's safety, but because they are wary of upsetting traditional gender roles which give girls little choice in matters of education (Kanwar and Taplin, 1999). The impact of cultural norms on women's education is clearly visible. The only way to increase literacy levels among women and young girls is to generate the demand for literacy, implying thereby that it is not lack of resources but the absence of demand, which is the constraining factor. We know that attitudes are difficult to change, but changes are needed in those attitudes of men, that are derogatory or patronising to women. The lives of Bangladeshi women are very complex, and no simple solution is possible to their problems.

It is impractical, in the present context of the Bangladesh scenario to suggest any overnight or radical changes. One must, therefore, find out the ways that are acceptable. Through education, a woman can become self-reliant, more aware of the changes in the surroundings, and have better self-esteem. The importance of education is aptly reflected by the various forms of discrimination against women based on their social and economic dependence on men in a male-dominated society. In order to improve their situation, women must have wider access to education, which can be possible through distance education.

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Distance education overcomes many of the obstacles faced by the Muslim girls and women in Bangladesh because, in distance education time, needs and places of the students are regulated according to their convenience. In this article the main concern is to highlight the use of distance education through a series of case studies of Muslim women enrolled at Bangladesh Open University and to identify some of the common problems and solutions in strengthening basic education through open and distance learning.

OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING IN BANGLADESH

The Open School is part of the Bangladesh Open University (BOU), and it offers secondary education through two formal programs – the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). This paper is concerned with the former. BOU was established on 20th October 1992 by an Act of the Parliament with the objective of transforming the vast human resources into an educated and trained work force. The University is composed of six academic Schools (faculties), and the Open School accounts for roughly 40% of the student enrollment.

The Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) exam is the first public examination; the minimum entrance requirement is 8 years of schooling. There is a great demand for admission into the SSC course and students are allowed up to five years to complete their course. The following table shows enrolment for the last seven years and the percentage of males and females.

TABLE 1– ENROLMENT FOR THE SENIOR SECONDARY CERTIFICATE

YEAR	TOTAL NO. STUDENTS	MALE	%	FEMALE	%
1995	16199	8938	55.18	7261	44.82
1996	12855	7082	55.09	5773	44.91
1997	15881	8352	52.59	7529	47.41
1998	16281	8866	54.46	7415	45.54
1999	23854	13413	56.23	10441	43.77
2000	25694	14132	55.00	11562	45.00
2001	31783	17481	55.00	14302	45.00

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Total	142547	78264	55.00	64283	45.00

(SOURCE: EXAMINATION DIVISION, BOU)

The table above shows the total number of students enrolled in the Secondary School Certificate program over the past seven years. Interestingly, the gender ratio is 55% male and 45% female. This is an encouraging way forward in bridging the gender gap.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected between November 2001-May 2002-May in seven districts in Bangladesh; Chittagong, Rangamati, Jessore, Sylhet, Bogra, Naogoan, and Mymensingh. These districts were chosen because they were seen as representative of the cultural diversity of the country and captured the differences between the rural-urban areas and the variety of landscapes.

Data were collected using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaires (a combination of open-ended and coded questions) were distributed to over 350 female students, but some were returned incomplete. For this paper we have only considered the completed questionnaires. In addition to the questionnaires, we conducted in-depth interviews and case studies with a wide range of female learners. The case studies help to illustrate the various experiences learners encounter. The women selected, as depicted in this paper, were seen as representative of other women.

One of the problems encountered during the research was that many women were unavailable because of the distance from their households to the tutorial centers where learners meet fortnightly. These sessions are not mandatory so attendance can be low.

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The aim of the questionnaire was to gather a socio-economic profile of the women and we asked questions about income of the family members, profession, reasons for dropping out of formal schooling, and reasons for enrolling with the Open School etc

RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

TABLE----11
RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE

SIZE	FREQUENCY	%
18-20	75	25%
21-25	120	40%
26-35	60	20%
36-40	30	10%
40 above	15	5%
Total	300	100

There was a wide age range of the respondents; the age varied from 18-60 years. The majority (40%) were aged 20-25 years.

TABLE----111
CAUSES OF RESPONDENTS DROPOUT FROM FORMAL SCHOOLING

CAUSES	FREQUENCY	%
Poverty	114	38%
Religion	27	9%
Early marriage	56	18.7%

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Occupation	30	10%
Father's death	27	9%
Ill-health	10	3.3%
Negligence	15	5%
Failure	21	7%
Total	**300**	**100**

Reasons for low female enrolment in secondary education are well documented (dropping out of formal schooling and a variety of reasons were given). The most common reasons in our study included poverty (38%); early marriage (18.7%), working (10%). Failure in examinations, religion, ill health and death of father are other reasons for dropout from formal schooling.

RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO INCOME OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS

TABLE----1V

INCOME PER MONTH	FREQUENCY	%
Less than Taka 3,000	152	50.7
Taka 3,000 – 5,999	115	38.3
Taka 6,000 – 10,000	21	7
More than Taka 10,000	12	4
TOTAL	**300**	**100**

The monthly income depends on ownership of land as well as the occupation of the earning members. Because of the difficulties the women face in identifying the exact monthly earnings of the family, they were divided into four income groups.

OCUPATION OF THE EARNING MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

MULTIPLE RESPONSES

TABLE-----V

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OCCUPATION	FREEQUENCY	%
Farming	110	36.7
Small Business	69	23.0
Other rural profession	82	27.3
Large business	13	4.3
Govt. Service	7	2.3
Other Urban profession	19	6.4
Total	**300**	**100**

The question regarding occupation sometimes elicited multiple responses. For example, a family could be dependent both on farming their own land as well as on the income of a small business. The data include occupations of other household members.

We have selected a few case studies of women from different districts to illustrate the wide participation of women in distance learning. The women who participated in the case studies are not given their real names to protect their identity.

CASE 1– NOORJAHAN: SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Noorjahan is from Naogoan. She is twenty-eight years old. When she was twelve years old, her parents divorced. She had two younger brothers and a sister. Her mother was very frustrated by the divorce. She spent most of her time praying and engaged in religious activities. All worldy things became meaningless to her. Their living conditions were difficult. They did not have enough money to pass their life smoothly. When she was in Class 8, her mother wanted her to give up school and go to work in a garment factory to earn money. However, Noorjahan expressed her strong desire to continue her studies. But the practical situation did not allow her to do so. Noorjahan's younger siblings were admitted to primary school. At the same time her Dark Age confined her within the four walls of the factory. She was very disappointed that she was not allowed to continue her studies. After working for eight years in a garment factory, her marriage was arranged by her mother. Her husband was a small businessman. After two years of marriage, she gave birth to twin sons. She

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experienced great difficulty during this time. When her children became five years old, she expressed her desire to be educated. But her husband was a little bit conservative. He asked her, what is the necessity for women to be more educated? He also added that as a Muslim woman, her first and foremost duty was to serve the family. Though he was not completely against her doing it, he was not in favor. Finally she was able to make her husband understand that she would study through distance education, which would not actually hamper her stereotypic role. After that she started her struggle to fulfill her dream. She was admitted in BOU. In her first semester, she was not very clear about this new system of education. But gradually she became used to it. English and Maths were the most difficult subjects for her. Her tutors helped her with English and Maths. She liked to attend her tutorial classes. She did not face any problems regarding the tutorial center, and it was effective during her first semester. She could not pass in English and Maths in her final exam. Meanwhile, she re-appeared for the courses and passed. Last year she passed SSC exam successfully. She has a desire to continue her studies.

She wants self-identity and to enhance her social value. As she has become successful, her mother-in-law and her husband are showing more respect towards her. Noorjahan believes that no women should miss any chances for further studying in order to enlighten her mind and upgrade her status. Through distance education her dream has really come true.

CASE 2– MINA: RAY OF HOPE

Mina was born and brought up in Chittagong. She is now twenty five years old. She has four elder brothers. At the age of fourteen, her father died. Her elder brothers dropped their studies and started working to assist the family. Mina became a burden to the family. In Bangladesh society and religion, girls are considered not an asset but the burden of any male person. Before marriage the father or brother are responsible and then after marriage the husband and in old age the son. Mina's mother arranged a marriage for her with a man, who was twenty years older than she. His first wife had died, and he had two children. Mina tried hard to cope with the undesirable situation. She had to perform all the household duties and had to take care of her stepchildren.

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At the age of twenty, she had her own daughter. When her daughter became five years old, she sought permission from her husband to enroll in her study again. Her husband was not very well educated, and he did not give her permission. She repeatedly sought permission. At last, her husband relented, but on condition that she had to do all household tasks without any interruption. Distance education provided a ray of hope for her. So Mina enrolled for schooling through the distance mode. The course materials that BOU provided were satisfactory, and she had no difficulty negotiating them. She had no classes to attend and only went to a designated center for taking her exam and attended tutorial classes twice a month. She received academic help from the tutorial centers as well as from her course mates. It seemed like a place of social gathering. This year, she wrote her S.S.C exam. She prepared herself for exams after 11 p.m. after finishing all her domestic duties. During this interview, she started crying to say that she was experiencing many difficulties without any cooperation from her husband. She expressed her desire to continue her study through distance learning. She said that the distance mode of education had helped her to rebuild her life according to her desire. She also believed that after finishing her study, she would be able to help her children in their education. She believed that distance education could help anybody who has social and religious barriers to cross.

CASE 3– FATEMA: OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Fatema is from Khulna. She was the fourth of six children in the family. Her father was the only breadwinner of the entire family. He was finding it difficult to carry on the education of the children. Fatema's mother knew how to teach people to read the Qur'an. To help support the family, she took a job of teaching the Qur'an to some female students. She received a meager wage, but it helped to buy books and school items for her children. Fatema had to do the household chores when her mother was away from home. She had to cook and take care of her younger brothers and sisters. She was spending more time with household activities. This led to her failure in the SSC exam though she was not a bad student. She felt disheartened. She thought that it would be humiliating to go back and sit in the same class for another year while her other friends would be senior. But Fatema's parents were very positive in their attitude about her study. Though her mother was not well educated, she believed that

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education should be a prior concern to everybody, especially for women because their lives are unpredictable. Fatema was so frustrated that she did not want to study further. She got engaged in spiritual matters and in domestic works. Her mother encouraged her to start her studies again. She had heard about the potential use of distance education through her relatives. She had collected more information from the nearest regional center of BOU. Despite many difficulties Fatema started her education again through distance education. When she first began her new studies she was afraid of coping with the different mode of education. Slowly she overcame her apprehension. Apart from her knowledge she gained self-confidence and self-reliance. The social contact through the tutorial centers had broadened her outlook. The course materials of BOU are appropriate to the standard and the needs of the students. The books are written in such a manner that a student can help herself. The only difficulty Fatema faced was that the tutorial center was far away from her house. Last year, she passed her SSC exam successfully. She is now eager to continue her study, because she has learnt from her experience that there is no alternative other than education. She believes that only due to strong will power and self-respect one can gain some valuable things in life. It is her message to other deprived girls that age and social barriers are not any problem for education. It is possible to be educated in all stage of life. She wishes that BOU will provide women with more facilities and opportunities that they can enrich themselves through education. She also hopes that, if tuition fees for women can be reduced, then it will encourage more women to participate in distance education.

CASE 4 – ROKEYA: COMING OUT OF THE MUTE LIFE

Rokeya is from Jessore. She was born into a conservative family 23 years ago. She is from the lower middle class. Her father is the only earning member of the family. She has two brothers and one younger sister. Her father works as a clerk in a bank. Her mother is a housewife, who engages in the stereotypical role of wife. Rokeya's eldest brother went to secondary school and the other two brothers went to a primary school. Her childhood memories were a bitter experience for her because she spent most of the time assisting her mother in household activities. After coming back from primary

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school, her main duty was to perform the domestic tasks and then, if she had time, she could study.

When she was in Class 8, her younger sister was born and her mother became sick. The family insisted that she should stay at home and care for her mother and the new born sister. Although she desired to continue her studies, her practical situation did not permit her to do so. She had no option other than to leave school. After two or three years she expressed her interest to continue her education, but her parents were hesitant to give her permission. They believed that it would hamper their family prestige. According to them women should be confined within the four walls of the house. They also believed that if they were unable to provide food and clothes for the women then she should leave.

When she was 18, she married a man who was a dubious businessman. Actually he was involved in women and child trafficking. Unfortunately the marriage brought nothing to Rokeya except misfortune and physical abuse. Her in-laws often tried to force her to bring money from her parents as dowry, and they made her life miserable when her family was unable to pay. They also threatened her with divorce. Finally, her marriage ended with divorce. Her parents gave her emotional support, which was badly needed at that time. With their encouragement she gained strength to fight for the future. She had to explore available options to continue her study and at last she got it, which was distance education through BOU. After that she enrolled in BOU. At first she was hesitant to join in this program because she had no idea of this new concept. But the idea of becoming a student after a break had excited her. During the first semester she sat for five subjects and afterwards for another five subjects. She told her friends that the benefit she got was that, if she failed the exam in some subjects she could retake the exams. The only difficulty she faced was that the exam results were very slow in coming and each time she had go to Gazipur to collect her testimonials. It was time consuming and wasteful. Despite all these constraints, she revived her dream again. She took her S.S.C exam this year. She is now working in a garment factory. She desires to have more education for job mobility. She is getting emotional and moral support from her course mates. She praised her tutors who supported her in her studies. She is now happy, because she believes that the

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certificate will be a great milestone in her life. She also believes that if anyone fails to achieve their first chance of education, she must take the second chance through distance education. Only education can bring women out of their mute lives.

CASE 5– RUPA: ENLIGHTENING BY HERSELF

Rupa is a girl who is deprived of all of her basic rights. She is from Sylhet. She was born as the fourth child in a family. She has three elder brothers and two younger sisters. When she was only three years old, she lost her mother. Her father remarried. He was the owner of a small piece of land. He was the only breadwinner of the family. He cultivated his own land. When Rupa was six years old she was admitted in a free primary school very near to their house. She was very unfortunate that neither her father nor her stepmother were interested in her education. From childhood, Rupa was interested to pursue higher education. She is a girl of strong goodwill and leadership quality. In every sphere of life she does her work in a self-reliant way. After passing Class 8 her father became sick and could not do any work, so Rupa was not able to continue with her education. However, she was enlightened and decided to compromise and to combine work with schooling. She worked in a tea garden for half shift and also to continue her studies. She knew that formal schooling was not possible for her, so she had to find an alternative way. And finally she got it. She was informed by one of her friends that through distance education she could fulfill her dream. So without any hesitation she took admission in BOU. In the first semester, she did not do well in all subjects. She received very low marks in some subjects. At that time she was disappointed and wanted to leave her studies, but her course mates were cooperative. They encouraged her and helped her keep her dream alive. Gradually she became comfortable with distance education. The flexibility of the system suited her very well. She hopes that audiovisual programs could be extended to assist the students. In that case, the tutorial centers could provide TV sets for them to watch and learn. She knows that she can continue her education through perseverance and strong desire to gain knowledge. She believes that only education can empower women. When she was 18, her parents tried their best

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to give her marriage, but she did not give her consent. For her, marriage is not a first priority, not certainly over education. First she wanted to earn by her own efforts and then marry. he area she lives in is a very conservative area. As a Muslim woman she was expected to marry early and not to work out of the house. But her stamina and willpower permitted her to overcome the social and religious barriers. Her message to other women is that anybody can continue their education through distance education. What is needed is that one has to be rational in her thinking and sincere in her working.

CASE 6– HALIMA: EDUCATION IS A LIFE LONG PROCESS

After passing 45 years Halima wants to revive her dream that she had as a young girl. She is from a very remote area of Rangamati district. Her father was a daily laborer and her mother worked in a paddy field. She had three brothers and sisters. When she was in class eight, she was married to a shopkeeper. Her husband also had a small plot of land to cultivate. Her mother-in-law also stayed with them. Though her husband had no objection, her mother-in law did not allow her to receive any more education. She declared that it is the major duty of *bouma* (wife of a son) to give birth to children and take care of the family. According to her, those who want to be educated are the devil's f riends. So Halima's dream was buried for that period. She gave birth to four children. From dust to dawn she had to do hard labor. Due to malnutrition and the extra load of the family, she was becoming sick and looked older than her age. When she was 44 years old, her mother-in law died. In the mean time her children grew up and were able to take care of themselves. Halima has a little poultry farm. From her earnings she met the expenses of her children's education. Now she started to feel inferior because she was not well educated. She heard about distance education, and she took admission in BOU. She had to spend whole nights studying. She had to bear extra loads to fulfill her dream. When she encountered some difficulty on course material she took help from the tutors. She said that if the counseling session could be extended from twice to four days in a month, it would be helpful for them, since they neither have enough money to keep a private tutor for them, nor are their parents educated enough to guide them. The course materials are not hard to her except English and Maths. She is taking help from her son. She was asked why she had

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come for further education in the middle of her life. She told us that she did so to enhance her social value and family prestige. She believes that age should not be a bar for education. Education is a life long process, which could be materialized through distance learning. The thing, which was necessary, was to manage everything in a proper way. She is now very happy to have education. Otherwise, it would not be possible for her to continue her study. She believes that distance education can have a strong impact on women's empowerment. That is why, the terms and conditions of distance education should be more flexible and opportunities should be extended. She also hopes that if more optional subjects related to women's issues are included in the curriculum they could be more encouraged in distance education.

CASE 7 - RASHIDA: EDUCATION SHOULD CONTINUE

Rashida is 35 years old. She is from Bogra District. Her father was employed as a typist in a private farm. Her mother was a housewife. She was very unfortunate that she could not get any formal education. She had only religious education. She could recite the Holy Qu'ran by heart. Rashida had five brothers and sisters. She received her early education from her village school. Afterwards, she could not continue her studies because her family and relatives were very conservative. Most of the female members of their family observe seclusion or *purdah*. Rahsida was different in her attitude and her dream was to become educated. Her father was not financially well off and he preferred to educate his sons. As a result, Rashida had to withdraw from her studies.

Rashida's parents arranged a marriage for her. Her husband was not well educated. Her marriage was based on the dowry her father paid. Her in-laws were not satisfied with the dowry and considered it very small. They continuously pressurized her for more money. In addition her husband started to beat her. She was experiencing a terrible life. Although in Islam divorce is permissible in practice it is not desirable. In the cease of divorce, the girl is blamed. Rashida suffered in silence. Ultimately she could not cope with the worsening situation. She left her husband and her parents provided her with emotional support. She applied to BOU and was accepted for admission. Besides studying she started private teaching. She understood that she had to pass a

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long path alone. That is why she wished to continue her study while working for money. This was only possible through distance education. At first she was reluctant, her daughter was already in school and she was doubtful whether she would adapt to the situation. However, once she started she found many of the women enrolled in distance education courses were older than she. She found English and Maths the most difficult subjects, but she enjoyed home economics. She said that if other subjects related to women's issues were included, the number of female students would increase. Sometimes she got depressed when she did not get the course material in time. Often she had to borrow books from former students. She reported her difficulty in collecting testimonials from Gazipur main campus of BOU. They faced accommodation and other financial constraints. She hopes that the observance of *purdah* should not stop education. Distance education is the second chance for those women who meet social and religious barriers. This encouraged her to share her success with others and enlighten other Muslim women who are not getting the chance for formal schooling because of *purdah*. According to her, distance education can help to overcome the fear and shyness about being a "mature" student.

In this section the seven case studies depict the various obstacles Muslim women have encountered to continue their education through open and distance learning. Each story is unique, however, similarities between each case show the determination and willingness of Bangladeshi women to succeed. They also help to highlight some of the cultural constraints hindering female education in Bangladesh such as early marriage, motherhood, the institution of *purdah*, and kinship obligations.

Some of the commonalities that are derived from the cases show that:

- Most of the women are from the lower middle class.

- Most of them have met with religious and social barriers.

- Almost all women dropped out of schooling because of poverty.

- Many women continue their study side by side with their other jobs.

- BOU gave them second chances for education.

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- English and Maths are the most difficult subjects.

- They received cooperation from their tutors and course mates.

- They could continue their study without hampering their stereotypic role

- Distance education helped them to overcome fears and worries about being a student after long a break.

- For some respondents tuition and course fees are high.

- It seems it was difficult for them to collect testimonials from the main campus of BOU.

- Finally, it enlightened their souls with dignity and self-respect.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The access of audio-visual facilities should be provided in Regional Resource Centres (RRCs) and in tutorial centers.
- Tuition fees could be reduced in case of female students.
- Some financial incentives could be given to the female students.
- There is a need for girl's education below secondary level. They can be uplifted through distance education.
- To empower women and bring them under the umbrella of BOU, it needs more advertisement by distributing booklets.

- BOU should have a section for empowering women and should go for further
- Research.
- Coordination among GO, NGOs and BOU is essential for getting positive result.
- Testimonial giving procedure should be decentralized.
- Counseling cell for female students should be introduced in the RRCs.
- Media of BOU can play a vital role for a public awareness campaign for women empowerment through distance education.

CONCLUSION:

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The results from the questionnaires and the case studies show how women were able to overcome social and religious barriers by their own willpower and with emotional support from kin groups. It is very encouraging that through distance education, women are becoming an asset for the family. In the urban areas and also in some rural areas, the practices of *purdah* are taking a more symbolic form. The younger women, who are generally more affluent and educated, and live in urban areas, may not live as the past generation did. With wider contact, the growing necessity for both partners to earn, and other contemporary changes in the everyday lives of the people, many urban and some rural women are becoming aware of their need to become independent.

This paper shows that open schooling can provide an adaptable and flexible approach as an alternative to formal schooling for Bangladeshi.

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Summary

The Africa Educational Trust in conjunction with the BBC World Trust launched a new and innovative educational programme in March 2002 called SOMDEL – the Somalia Distance Education Literacy programme – Life Skills Approach. The aim of the programme is to provide basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to out-of-school children and adults who missed out or were denied access to conventional schooling. This is especially significant in Somaliland and Somalia where civil war has ravaged the country, and the educational system severely disrupted. A whole generation of people has been excluded from education.

The project is known locally in Somali as *Macallinka Raddiya* (Radio Teacher). It consists of a three way approach which combines radio, print, and face-to-face teaching. Each week on Thursday evenings at 5.30, a thirty minute radio broadcast is aired after the BBC World Service News. The main aims of the programme are:

? To ensure that people in difficult circumstances, particularly girls, have access to literacy, numeracy, and life skills

? To reach thousands of disadvantaged children, young men and women

? To improve the capacity in villages and towns to deliver local literacy and numeracy skills

? To develop distance teaching and audio (broadcast) materials

? To improve the understanding, awareness and discussion of health, human rights, and environment issues

The initial series of 50 radio broadcasts came to an end in March 2003, and the International Research Foundation for Open Learning was commissioned by the Africa Educational Trust to undertake the external evaluation.

The report is divided into 4 Sections. The first section provides the introduction and background of the evaluation. In Section 2, the approach to the evaluation and the research design are discussed. The evaluation uses the log frame of the project as an overview to measure the proposed goal, purpose, outputs and activities against the achievements, with additional comments made during the evaluation. This is supplemented by in-depth and detailed research. The research design, accordingly, includes both quantitative evidence to show the number of people benefiting from the programme throughout Somalia and Somaliland and qualitative evidence about the effectiveness and usefulness of the programme by interviewing a wide range of stakeholders – learners, teachers, listeners and AET local staff. A variety of data collection techniques were used: examination and scrutiny of statistical records and documents, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, case studies, surveys

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and participant observation. To document regional differences, the evaluation was carried out in Hargeisa, Berbera, Buroa, Borama in Somaliland and Bossasso in Puntland.

In Section 3, the main findings of the research are discussed. A summary of the main findings are:

? 10,908 learners have enrolled in the SOMDEL programme in 351 S OMDEL classes throughout Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia.

? The majority of registered learners are female and over-age (older than school age)

? SOMDEL is providing a beneficial service to children of school-age who do not have access to formal schools. In each region, at least 2 remote villages are targeted for SOMDEL classes. Data show that 363 school-age children are currently enrolled in SOMDEL classes in Somaliland.

? Radio is a powerful communication and educational tool.

? The SOMDEL programme is an all-inclusive approach - it reaches a wide audience – not only those learners who are registered for the course but also for those listeners who can access the programmes via radio.

? The content of the life skills messages are culturally specific and transmit knowledge and information about important health, environment, and human rights issues.

? There are regional differences in the way SOMDEL is perceived and operates.

In section 4, Recommendations and Conclusion are discussed.

? SOMDEL should continue beyond this first year. The data collected during this evaluation show overwhelming support and commitment for the programme by a wide range of stakeholders. The most significant outcome is the number of people who have gained *access* to education. Thousands of people have benefited from the programme, both registered learners and listeners.

During the evaluation, it was shown that the radio broadcasts in form of "edutainm ent" make learning a fun and informative experience. It caters to a wide range of people with different needs and aspirations. The broadcast can reach parts of Somalia where conflict and fighting prevent other forms of educational delivery. Throughout the evaluation, various stakeholders were asked if they would like *Macllinka Raddiyaha* to continue, and there was overwhelming support for the programme. The radio teacher is a novel and successful initiative – it provides access to education to some of the mo st marginalised and excluded from society and raises the public consciousness on very important themes and issues that are crucial to development.

? A strategy needs to be dived to expand SOMDEL further to target two distinct groups: (i). children of school age in remote and rural areas with community support Special emphasis should be in areas where there are no functioning schools and

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to devise ways to reach more out-of-school children. Major obstacles to this recommendation are the inaccessibility of com munities, lack of transport, the lack of qualified teachers and seasonal migration. More community involvement would instil a greater sense of ownership into the programme.

(ii.) Male youthwho have missed out of formal school SOMDEL should also strive to focus on the young men who have not benefited from education. This, however, is a difficult group to target for a variety of cultural reasons.

Programme Pointers

A set of pointers emerges from the evaluation for improving SOMDEL programmes. These are:

? To provide further training for teachers on the concept of distance education.

? To stress the importance of the audio aspect of the progra mme as a significant component of the SOMDEL material.

? To emphasise the broadcast component to the learners

? To include a wider range of pronunciations in the broadcasts to cater to the regional variations in accent

? To compile a uniform template in Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia for the collection of statistical data on each learner during registration. The learner profile form should include the name, gender, age and date of enrolment. This will provide useful information for the AET database. If possible, teachers should also notify AET of drop-outs.

? To award the volunteer teachers with a certificate for participating in the SOMDEL programme.

? To devise an examination to measure the learner's literacy and numeracy skills.

? To improve the monitoring of SOMDEL classes throughout the country and t o keep regular monitoring and evaluation reports.

? To prepare an audio cassette library of the SOMDEL broadcasts so teachers and learners can have regular access to the programmes. This would enable teachers to play the cassette at their convenience and avoid conflict over the timing of the broadcast, the conflict with prayers, and poor transmission of a programme. It would also allow a teacher to go at his or her own pace. In some areas, SOMDEL classes started much later than those in Hargeisa.

? To provide SOMDEL staff with research training skills. Action research could benefit the programme as well as to improve the skills of the individual staff members.

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? To improve the distribution of workbooks and to make the materials more robust.

? To distribute the radios more efficiently.

? To improve rapport and communication between the AET office in Hargeisa and offices in Puntland and southern Somalia.

? To provide the learners with basic materials such as pencils and exercise books.

? To promote SOMDEL and to work with other non-government organisations throughout Somaliland, Somalia and in neighbouring countries where there are Somali - speakers and to keep them informed of SOMDEL activities and achievements.

The report concludes that SOMDEL has a lot of promise to deliver literacy, numeracy and life skills to thousands of disadvantaged people. SOMDEL is a flexible and adaptable approach to literacy and empowerment and in the long term it is hoped that SOMDEL will assist in the alleviation of poverty through access to basic education for all.

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SectionI: Introduction

The Africa Educational Trust in conjunction with the BBC World Trust launched a new and innovative educational programme in March 2002 called SOMDEL – the Somalia Distance Education Literacy programme – Life Skills Approach. The aim of the programme was to provide basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to out-of-school children and adults who missed out or were denied access to conventional schooling. This was especially significant in Somaliland and Somalia where civil war has ravaged the country, and the educational system severely disrupted. A whole generation of people has been excluded from education.

The project is known locally in Somali as *Macallinka Raddiya* (Radio Teacher). It consists of a three way approach which combines radio, print, and face-to-face teaching. Each week on Thursday evenings at 5.30, a thirty minute radio broadcast is aired after the BBC World Service News. There are two main aims of the programme: firstly, to help registered SOMDEL learners improve literacy and numeracy skills and secondly, to create an awareness and understanding of important issues in health, nutrition, environment and human rights.

The initial series of 50 radio broadcasts came to an end in M arch 2003, and the International Research Foundation for Open Learning was commissioned by the Africa Educational Trust to undertake the external evaluation.

The evaluation took place from the 22nd February – 3rd March, 2003. An outline of the main activities during the evaluation is described in Appendix 1. Several places were visited during the evaluation, and these included Hargeisa, B erbera, Buroa, Borama in Somaliland and Bossasso in Puntland. Because of security reasons, the evaluator was not able to visit the southern part of Somalia. The evaluation does not include information about the impact of SOMDEL among Somali-speaking refugees or the impact of SOMDEL in neighbouring countries. The evaluator was not a Somali-speaker and relied on translation from her trained research assistants.

Fortunately, the evaluation coinc ided with two SOMDEL broadcasts, so the evaluator was able to observe first-hand the broadcasts in two different regions – Haregisa, Somaliland and Bossasso, Puntland. The specific aims of the evaluation were to analyse the effectiveness of the SOMDEL programme in terms of reaching its target beneficiaries; to examine the impact of this three-way approach which incorporates printed materials, radio broadcasts and face-to-face instruction; to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this approach with a variety of stakeholders; and to make recommendations or suggestions for future programmes.

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Section II Study Design and Implementation

The evaluation uses the log frame of the project as an overview to measure the proposed goal, purpose, outputs and activities against the achievements, with additional comments made during the evaluation. This approach was supplemented by in-depth and detailed research. The research design, accordingly, included both quantitative evidence to show the number of people benefiting from the programme throughout Somalia and Somaliland, and qualitative evidence about the effectiveness and usefulness of the programme by interviewing a wide range of stakeholders – learners, teachers, listeners and AET staff. During the evaluation, a variety of data collection techniques were used: examination and scrutiny of correspondence, records, monitoring reports, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, case studies, surveys, and participant observation. To document regional differences, the evaluation was carried out in Hargeisa, Berbera, Buroa and Borama in Somaliland and Bossasso in Puntland. In addition, a small research team in Hargeisa was formed and trained in interview techniques. Two surveys were conducted on SOMDEL learners and listeners in Hargeisa. The following instruments, which are the basis of our findings, were developed and used for the various stakeholders.

Learners
? Informal Group discussions and interviews with over 700 learners in 25 SOMDEL classes were held in Hargeisa, Berbera, Buroa, Borama and Bossasso. This provided feedback about the current SOMDEL programme and proposed recommendations for future programmes from the learners' perspective.

? Detailed case studies of SOMDEL learners.

? Visit to a remote village community where SOMDEL is providing basic education for school-age children who do not have access to formal school.

? A learner survey was conducted in Hargeisa on a random sample of 42 SOMDEL learners using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

Teachers
? Focus group discussions with 76 SOMDEL teachers in 4 locations: Hargeisa, Buroa, Bossasso and Borama. This allowed us to examine the regional variations in the approach of the comprehension of the SOMDEL programme and the ways in which the instruction and materials were delivered. By comparing and contrasting the various experiences of the teachers, it allowed us to look at the similarities as well as the differences according to region.

? Participant observation in 25 SOMDEL classes allowed the evaluator to examine the pedagogical and organisational structure of SOMDEL classes. Observations also

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recorded where the class took place (i.e. in a formal school or private house), the target audience, and the use and presence of SOMDEL materials.

? Participant observation during two live radio broadcasts for the SOMDEL programme in 6 classes in two areas – Hargeisa and Bossasso. This allowed the evaluator to see first hand the interaction between learners and teachers during the classroom situation and to examine the quality of the transmission of the BBC broadcast.

Listeners

? A Listener survey was also conducted in Hargeisa on a random sample of 35 people in a variety of occupations throughout the town to see how many people knew about the programme. One aim of this survey was to see how many listen to the programme and why.

AET staff

? In-depth semi structured interviews with Africa Educational Trust regional coordinators. This was extremely important especially in interviews with the regional co-ordinator of Puntland and southern Somalia. Because of political instability and security concern, it was impossible to travel beyond Bossasso to other areas within Puntland and to southern Somalia.

? Telephone interviews with BBC staff - including the Director the BBC World Service Trust.

Limitations

The security situation in the southern part of Somalia did not permit the evaluator to visit Mogadishu. However, structured face-to-face interviews with key SOMDEL officials from the south provided sufficient information to make the evaluation representative. The evaluator was not a Somali-speaker and relied on the interpretation from her trained research assistants in the field. As a result, a variety of approaches were employed to cross-check the reliability of data and information.

The evaluator was unable to visit refugee camps in neighbouring countries to examine the impact of the SOMDEL programmes.

Measurements of individual learner's numeracy and literacy skills were not evaluated because an examination had not been implemented at the time of the evaluation.

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SectionIII: Programme Outcomes

The main findings on the effectiveness and achievements of the SOMDEL programme are presented in this section in two ways. The first is to present the log-frame, remark on the extent of achievement and comment; this provides an overall view of the programme. Secondly, in order to obtain a more detailed understanding of the dynamics of SOMDEL from the stakeholders'point of view, the results from the various data collection activities are discussed.

Table 1:SOMDEL Logframe, Achievements and Comments

Narrative Summary	Extent of Achievement	Comments
Goal: To help reduce poverty and gender inequality in Somalia by improving access to education for people from rural areas and other areas affected by conflict, especially young people who have not had access to schools.	SOMDEL is providing a beneficial service to children of school-age who do not have access to formal schools. In each region at least two remote villages are targeted for SOMDEL classes. Data for Somaliland show that 363 school-age children are currently enrolled in SOMDEL classes. Increased demand for education, especially by females.	There is a desire to expand SOMDEL classes to more remote areas and to increase the number of rural classes. The main obstacles in remote areas are inaccessibility and lack of transport and resources.
Purpose To ensure that people in difficult circumstances, particularly girls have access to literacy, numeracy and life skills which will improve their opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in rural and post conflict areas in Somalia.	Data show that the majority (70%) of SOMDEL learners are female. In many cases, SOMDEL offers the only access to literacy, numeracy and life skills to over-age females. Trained teachers volunteer to teach the SOMDEL classes.	SOMDEL classes are extremely successful in offering females their only opportunity to education. The classes are adaptable and flexible which complement the diverse needs of its female learners.
Outputs 12,000 disadvantaged children and young men and women with basic literacy and numeracy skills and improved knowledge and understanding of health, human rights and environmental issues.	Enrollment statistics show that over 10,000 learners are registered with SOMDEL. These include both school-age children and over-age adults.	Interviews confirm the success of SOMDEL providing basic education and life skills knowledge. (at the time of the evaluation the examination had not taken place)
Improved capacity in 300 to 500 villages and local communities to deliver local literacy and numeracy programmes.	351 classes are currently being run throughout and the commitment and dedication of the community demonstrate improved capacity. There are 356 volunteer SOMDEL teachers, The majority received in-service training through workshops.	Great demand to expand even further if resources allow.

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Distance teaching and audio (broadcast) materials developed and available for refugees and other Somali speaking communities in neighbouring countries, especially children who may have no access to literacy in their mother tongue.	The broadcasts are aired throughout Somalia and Somaliland as well as in neighbouring countries. The course has the potential to reach Somali speakers in neighbouring countries.	The evaluator was not able to determine the impact of the SOMDEL broadcasts in refugee camps or outside the country .The evaluator is unaware of material distribution outside of SOMALIA. It is hoped in the second phase, further expansion of SOMDEL will include access for refugees.
Improved understanding, awareness and discussion of health, human rights and environmental issues amongst the large radio listening public in Somalia, refugee camps and Somali speakers in neighbouring countries.	A unique feature about SOMDEL is that the radio broadcasts can be heard by anyone who has a radio. In a random survey conducted in Hargeisa it was shown that 88% of people listened regularly to the programmes because of their educational content and their entertainment quality.	Surveys showed that listeners retained the information from the broadcasts. Health issues were extremely popular with the listener audience. (The evaluation did not examine the impact of the audio broadcasts outside the listening public in Somalia.)
Activities: Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation involving range of stakeholders	A wide range of planning activities were undertaken for the SOMDEL programme. Participatory impact assessment was conducted in Somaliland from Sept-Dec. 2001 AET External monitoring - April 2002; May-June 2002; and October 2002. Interim Report 2002 Quarterly workplans for May/June 2002; Aug/Oct 2002; Nov/Jan. 2003.	Excellent planning and monitoring prior to the launch of the SOMDEL programme. Frequent monitoring throughout the SOMDEL programme. During the evaluation it was noted that AET staff outside Hargeisa faced difficulties monitoring the classes. This was often due to lack of transport, funds, and outbreaks of conflict. This can be improved.
Radio information and advertising for course and application procedures	Advertising and publicity about the course with details of application procedure were made in Somaliland, Somalia and Puntland.. All ngos and international organisations were notified about the programme via e-mail. Weekly information and publicity announcements were broadcast	Excellent publicity about the course even in areas where conflict has prevented access to formal education.

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	on the BBC Somali Service Other BBC programmes, such as Focus on Africa and What's your Problem also publicised the programme.	
Registration of village and district community groups with nominations for teachers	351 classes were registered for the SOMDEL programme. Every teacher had to be nominated by the community.	Nomination of teachers by the community is an inclusive strategy and helps the community to oversee and participate in the project.
Training workshops: a. trainers b. teachers c. distribution of village literacy	a. one week training of trainers workshop was held in Hargeisa for over 30 trainers from Mogadishu, Bossasso, Garoe and all 5 regions in Somaliland. Additional training workshops were held in southern Somalia by AET Programme Manager, Hassan Embassy. b. A total of 18 Teacher trainer workshops were held throughout Somaliland, Puntland and Southern Somalia and a total of 459 teachers were trained. c. Distribution of materials was done in batches. In some cases there were some delays in receiving the written materials on time to coincide with the broadcasts. Radio distribution was also delayed. During the evaluation in February 2003, 100 radios were distributed.	The training workshops were well attended; however, interviews with teachers revealed that they would like further training in teaching in distance education mode. c. There have been problems with the production and distribution of materials. In some areas the materials were received late or incomplete. Improvements need to be made in the distribution of radios. An inventory of all radio distributed throughout Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland must be kept and up-dated.
Radio broadcasts to support written course and face-face teaching	The first radio broadcast was aired on the 28 March, 2002 and the last was in March, 2003. A total of 50 radio broadcasts were aired to coincide with the written material. Each week a main theme topic and key words were introduced to the learners and listeners. The number of face-to-face classes vary from 2 per week – 6 per week.	The broadcasts were well received. Learners and listeners appear to benefit from the programmes and retain knowledge The themes were culturally specific to the SOMALI community. The content and the format of the production were well designed. Suggestions were made to change the time of the broadcast because it conflicted with prayers. In Puntland it was noted that the broadcasts should be held on a different day because Thursday was the "weekend" and teachers

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| | | did not want to hold classes on Thursdays. |
| | | Copies of all SOMDEL radio broadcasts should be made available on cassette as it would allow teachers to teach at their own pace and convenience. |

Quantitative data.

The statistics collected for Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia show that over 10,908 learners have enrolled in the SOMDEL programme in 351 SOMDEL classes with 367 teachers. Table 1 displays the breakdown by location. Interestingly, the data reveal that a total of 594 or 6% of SOMDEL learners are disabled. This shows that SOMDEL is making an impact in providing education to those who are often marginalised because of disability.

Table 2 SOMDEL Learners

Location	No. students	No.Disabled	No. Classes	No. Teachers
Southern Somalia	4211	276	145	119
Somaliland	4,316	150	133	175
Puntland	2381	168	73	73
Total	**10,908**	594	351	367

Statistics on the gender ratio of SOMDEL learners are currently being compiled; however, it is estimated that over 70% of the registered learners are female.

Detailed data for each area – Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia are shown in the following tables. The data, however, are not collected in a consisssent manner in each area. In some cases, the statistical data show discrepancies.

Regional Information

Table 3 Somaliland

Region	No of classes	No. of Students
Hargeisa/Waquoy Galbed	49	1495
Borama/Awdal	11	249
Berbera/Sahil	19	487
Buroa/Togdher	34	793
Erigavo/Sanaag	20	359
Total	133	3383

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Table 4 Puntland

Region	Classes	Students	Disabled	Teachers
Mudug Sheikhunaa	34	1016	69	34
Nugal	20	744	45	20
Bari – Qardho	11	368	28	11
Bari – Bossasso and Sanag	8	253	26	8
Total	73	2381	168	73

Table 5. Southern Somalia

Region	Classes	Students	Teachers
Waajid	10	309	11
Jowhar	19	473	25
Qoryooley	17	549	22
Baydhaba	22	645	28
Marka	47	1849	52
Muqdisho	14	386	19
Total	128	4211	157

During the evaluation, a total of 25 SOMDEL classes were visited in Hargeisa, Berbera, Buroa, Borama and Bossasso. Significantly, 17 of the classes were exclusively female. The high number of female learners enrolled in SOMDEL classes was also confirmed by teachers and AET outreach officers. The demand for education by females, especially over-age females, is very encouraging. In many cases, the evaluation has shown that SOMDEL provides the only alternative for them to become numerate, literate and to learn about life skills.

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Children of School age

Another group that the SOMDEL programme is reaching are the non-enrolled children of school age. A specific aim of the SOMDEL programme, as depicted in the log-frame, is to target remote, rural areas where children of school age do not have access to formal or conventional schools. As shown in Table 2, there are 10 remote villages in Somaliland where children are benefiting from SOMDEL classes. In each of the 5 regions, 2 classes are targeted exclusively for school-age children. Presently, a total of 363 children – 274 boys and 89 girls are enrolled in SOMDEL classes. (Data for Puntland and Southern Somalia will be forthcoming)

Table 6 SOMDEL- village school-age children in Somaliland

Region	Location	Learners Male Female		Total
Awdal	Halimale	30	10	40
Awdal	Ruqi	22	9	31
Sahil	Hagal	20	6	26
Sahil	Rari-bul	18	3	21
Togdher	War-cimraan	45	15	60
Toghder	Qaybta	30	10	40
Hargeisa	Bend-Amaan	21	9	30
Hargeisa	Habsweyn	24	9	33
Sanaag	Kal-Sheikh	25	7	32
Sanaag	Shimbirale	39	11	50
Total		274	89	363

SOMDEL Learner with AET Outreach officer, Ahmed

During the evaluation, one of these communities, Qaybta Village in Togdher Region was visited to see how SOMDEL operated for out-of-school children. Qaybta does not have a school and the closest school is about 20 kilometres away. The classes take place in a mud block room with a thatched roof; there is no furniture and the children sit on the dirt floor.

Village School, Togdher Region – SOMDEL class for children of "school age"

During an informal discussion with the children, they expressed their desire to be able to read and write and welcomed the SOMDEL initiative. A detailed interview with the SOMDEL teacher revealed that 30 students were enrolled aged 7-13 years. There is no primary school nearby. SOMDEL offers the only access to education for the community. The teacher holds 6 SOMDEL classes per week for two hours per day from 8-10am. Some of the problems he encountered were the lack of exercise books and pencils for the children; the lack of money to purchase batteries for his radio; and the timing of the broadcasts. Some of the children live several kilometres away and the evening broadcast

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is not suitable for them. Therefore, he suggested a copy of the broadcasts on audio cassette which would enable his learners to benefit from the programme.

The major constraints of reaching out-of-school children in rural areas are:
? The lack of trained, qualified volunteer teachers in the community
? The lack of transport and remoteness of the communities
? Difficulties of AET staff to get materials to these areas
? Seasonality of some of the communities
? Drought and poverty
? Security risk for AET staff

During the evaluation 25 classes were visited as depicted in the following table.

Table 7– SOMDEL Classses Visited During Evaluation

Location	Name of School/Venue	No. of learners present*	Type of venue	No. of Tutorials/week
Hargeisa	Ayaan Women's Centre	25 females	NGO - room	4 days/week
Hargeisa	SOCSA	19 females	SOSCA	2 days/week
Hargeisa	State House	21 females	Private house	2 days/week 30 minute shifts
Hargeisa	Malco/DurDur	All male- 22 soldiers and students	Formal classroom	2 days/week
Hargeisa	Malco/DurDur	50 females	Private class	6 days/week
Hargeisa	Hovoyoco	20 15F/5M	Ngo	2 days/week
Berbera	Women's centre	13 females	Ngo	6days/week
Berbera	"	15 females	Ngo	6 days/week
Berbera	"	32 females	Ngo	6 days/week
Berbera	Sahil Primary	23-18F/4M	Formal classroom	6 days/week
Berbera	Sahil Primary	24 girls	Formal Classroom	6 days/week
Berbera	Police Line School	35 females	Formal classroom	6 days/week
Buroa	Qaytab village school	10- 4F/6M	Mud/thatch room-village	6 days/week
Buroa	Local primary	19 females	Formal school	6 days/week
Buroa	Local primary	17 females	Formal school	6 days/week
Bossasso	Ngo	56 females	Private school	4 days/week
Bossasso	Ngo	28- 12F/16M	Private school NGO	4 days/week

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Bossasso	Ngo	39-30F/9M	Private school Ngo	4 days/week
Bossasso	Ngo	40-29F/11M	Private School Ngo	4 days/week
Bossasso	Ngo	18 11 females/7 boys	Private school Ngo	4 days/week
Bossasso	AET office	33 females	AET office	4 days/week
Borama	NGO	26 females	NGO -SOWDA	6 days/week
Borama	Local primary	20 females	Formal school	6 days/week
Borama	NGO – Awdal	30 females	Ngo room	6 days/week
Borama	Room	40+Females	Private House	6 days/week

Some of the main findings from our observations of classrooms and meetings are as follows. In our sample of 25 classes, 670 learners were present- most of the learners were female 594 (89%) compared with 76 (11%) male. In some classes they were notified in advance of our visit so it is difficult to know how "genuine" the attendance was; however, the majority of classes we visited were on spec so the learners we met would have been there irrespective of our visit.

SOMDEL student– Amina, 16 years old Berbera

The photograph above shows Amina, a 16 year old vegetable seller. She sells foodstuffs in the morning and in the afternoon she attends SOMDEL classes. During an interview with her, we asked her why she enrolled with SOMDEL. She replied, *"I want to be literate and numerate so I can keep a list of my debtors and to improve my business."*

The location of where SOMDEL classes are held vary considerably- from a formal classroom in a school, a room in a private house, or a room in a local ngo. This flexible and adaptable approach allows SOMDEL classes to take place in a variety of locations.

Another significant finding is the regional differences of how SOMDEL operates. For example, the number of tutorials or face-to-face classes that are held vary. In Hargeisa, the usual pattern is to hold two classes per week and at least one of these classes is held on a Thursday evening to coincide with the BBC broadcast. Whereas outside of Hargeisa, the SOMDEL classes took on a different form, and most of the classes were held in the afternoons, six days per week in Buroa, Berbera and Borama. The reason for this is because the learners want to go to a class six days per week because it "mirrors" the formal school. They want the SOMDEL classes to be viewed and regarded just as important as the classes in conventional schools. In contrast, in Puntland SOMDEL classes are held 4 days per week, Saturday to Wednesday. They do not hold classes on Thursday evenings because it is the beginning of their weekend. Evidently, they record the broadcasts on audio cassettes and then play them on another day. When SOMDEL first started the local radio station use to record the broadcasts and play them twice a week; however, the station has been shut down by the local warlord.

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Informal discussions with learners in the various classes revealed the following points.

Perspective of SOMDEL Learners

? Reasons for enrolment

- The majority of learners found SOMDEL classes compatible with their domestic responsibilities and commitments. As shown in Table 7, Enrolment in 17 classes was exclusively female.

- The majority enrolled because they do not have to pay fees.

- They receive free materials and free face-to-face instruction (it was noted; however, that in most classes learners have to share materials)

- The time of the classes (usually afternoons) was convenient especially for the female learners

- They found the topics interesting and relevant to their life. The favourite topics in the workbooks were female genital mutilation, breastfeeding and khat chewing.

- The most popular topic in all the classes was the theme on female genital mutilation and other health issues such as Khat chewing, and breast-feeding followed by the programmes on the environment.

- They enjoyed the broadcast and remarked, "Broadcast is a good teacher"; "We are learning a lot of knowledge we did not know before" and they particularly liked the drama aspect of the radio production and the way in which the theme topics are debated and the various perspectives between traditional and modern views.

If the programme were to continue, additional suggested topics for new programmes include: family planning, environment, breast feeding, English and Arabic, history, drama, and literature.

? Problems encountered:

- Some of the learners did not understand the distance component and some did not listen to the radio broadcasts. When asked about the broadcast from the previous week, very few learners could remember the topic of the last radio broadcast that they heard. (This problem was highlighted in the AET interim report when it was remarked, "that the radios and broadcasts were seen as the symbol and glue rather than the main teaching tool" *Interim report*, April, 2002)

- Many viewed the SOMDEL class as a conventional class and wanted to attend classes 6 days per week like a formal class operates.

- Seasonal migration during the summer period disrupted studies.

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? Suggestions
- The learners want to take an examination at the end of the course.

- Others suggested a certificate to acknowledge their success. As shown in the picture below a SOMDEL learner displays her numeracy skills.

Somdel learner, Borama

To cross-check the validity of the group discussions, learners were also interviewed individually. A small study was conducted in Hargeisa and the suggestions and comments made in the group discussions were confir med.

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Perspective of the SOMDEL teachers

During the evaluation, a series of focus group discussions were held with teachers in four locations: Hargeisa, Buroa, Bossasso and Borama. Detailed findings from each focus group discussiona are found in Appendix 2. The main findings from the focus group discussions are as follow:

? What do you think of SOMDEL?
- Unanimous support for the SOMDEL programme. All teachers commended the initiative and thought SOMDEL should continue beyond this year.

- Teachers volunteered to be SOMDEL teachers because they want to "help their people" and to help their country become literate. Many volunteers believe it is their duty to help.

- Majority of teachers had received formal training through a workshop.

? Materials
- The content of the material and the lay-out of the workbooks were fine overall. The majority believed that the topics were relevant and culturally important. The topics they enjoyed the most were health issues. In particular, the favourite topics were female genital mutilation, breastfeeding and HIV/Aids awareness and human rights. Other suggested topics for future programmes included – topics on sports, children's rights, corruption, infectious diseases, literature and history. All liked the drama aspect of the programmes.

- Some teachers mentioned that they use the SOMDEL materials in other classes that they teach. As shown in Table 7 many of the classes are taught in private homes.

- It was suggested to combine some of the workbooks together and to only have 2-3 books and not 7. It was also suggested to make the materials more durable and robust with better covers and binding.

? Broadcast
- Timing of the broadcast provoked discussions. Some teachers thought it was fine as it is whilst other said it should be changed because it conflicted with prayers. In Bossasso, it was suggested to broadcast on a different day because it conflicted with the "weekend."

- The quality of transmission varied throughout the regions. In particular, teachers in Bossasso said the broadcast was very poor. (This was observed during my visit to Puntland)

- The majority of teachers did not like the music and thought it should be improved. It was suggested to have a better "theme" tune for SOMDEL.

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- Some teachers complained about the use of southern Somalia speakers and did not like the accents. They also complained about southern Somalia spelling for cer tain words.

- Some teachers did not fully comprehend the importance of the distance component and some used the materials without listening to the radio broadcasts.

- It was commented that the radios they received are cheap and do not last very long. They were described as "one time use and throw them away"

? Suggestions for Improvemen t
- More training workshops, especially to focus on the concept of distance education.

- More information on certain topics. The male teachers said they felt inadequate to teach about breastfeeding and would like more training in subjects that they felt they didn't understand properly.

-Flexible enrolment of learners at different times and of different abilities caused difficulty for some teachers. (though they coped with this by using two blackboards in ne room and dividing the learners by ability and date of enrolment).

- They would like some guidelines on how to cater for the diverse abilities of their learners and how to teach learners who enrolled late

- More visual aids such as posters and maps

- Incentives. Most said they would like to receive a certificate to acknowledge their participation in the SOMDEL programme. They would also like to receive a financial award. Some of the teachers were confused as to why other programmes offered by AET the teachers were paid and they were not.

Listener Survey

A listener survey was conducted in Hargeisa to see whether those who were not registered SOMDEL learners listened to the BBC broadcasts. A total of 35 people were interviewed randomly, and 88% knew about the programme s and listened regularly. This is encouraging because it confirms that the programme reaches not only those enrolled but also listeners. Further research is needed to examine the impact tha t SOMDEL has on the "listeners" especially outside Hargeisa in oth er regions and throughout Somalia and in neighbouring countries.

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Perspective of AET staff– including regional coordinators and outreach officers

Many of the Africa Educational Trust staff work on different programmes, and not solely on the SOMDEL programme. During interviews and discussions I obtained their views about the SOMDEL programme.

- Teacher Incentives: A prime concern of the staff was the lack of incentives for teachers. They thought that teachers should receive an honorarium or so me sort of incentive. They remarked that there was some confusion about why teachers for other AET programmes were paid, and SOMDEL teachers were not. Clarification needs to be provided to the teachers and to the AET staff.

- The justification as to why the majority of SOMDEL classes are held in towns was because there is a great demand for the programme because a significant number of people are illiterate. Towns are more accessible, reach a larger number of people, and there are more qualified volunteer teachers.

- The outreach offices found it difficult to expand SOMDEL classes to remote and rural areas because of inaccessibility, lack of transport, the lack of qualified people to volunteer and security concerns.

- There are problems in monitoring classes because of lack of transport and because of their other duties and responsibilities. (Monitoring varied from area to area.)

- They have experienced problems in receiving enough materials and in the distribution of materials and late arrival of radios.

In an in-depth interview with the Regional Co-ordinator for southern Somalia, he discussed the success of the SOMDEL programme. Despite the political instability and the constant bouts of clan warfare, there are over 4,500 registered SOMDEL learners. This is encouraging because it shows that even where conflict and fighting prevents other forms of educational delivery - SOMDEL provides an alternative strategy.

Observations during Class visits and Broadcast

The evaluation coincided with two Thursday evening broadcasts in two different localities – Hargeisa, Somaliland and Bossasso, Puntland.

1. In Hageisa – Two SOMDEL classes were visited during the broadcasts In each class, there was a radio and SOMDEL materials were present. The topic of the Broadcast was Female Genital Mutilation. The transmission was good and the learners listened to the broadcasts.

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2. In Bossasso – Two SOMDEL classes were visited during the broadcast. In each class, there was a radio, and SOMDEL materials were present. The transmission of the broadcast was very poor and the interference made it difficult for learners to listen.
In both classes, the teacher held the radio and tried to get a clear transmission. It was very difficult to hear the broadcast. Learners were not paying attention and did not seem to understand the topics. The learners in Bossasso do not normally attend SOMDEL classes on Thursday evenings. Teachers informed me that they record the broadcasts and listen to them on Saturday with their learners.

The various perspectives from learners, teachers and AET staff members confirm that SOMDEL is succeeding in providing access to a large number of people throughout Somaliland, Puntland and Southern Somalia. There is overwhelming support and commitment for the programme. The following section incorporates some of the remarks and findings from these stakeholders and suggests ways to strengthen and improve SOMDEL.

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Section V: Recommendations and Conclusion

1. SOMDEL should continue beyond this first year. The data collected during this evaluation show overwhelming support and commitment for the programme by a wide range of stakeholders. The most significant outcome of the evaluation is the finding that thousands of people throughout Somaliland and Somalia have *access* to education. Distance education and open learning provide a realistic and viable alternative when more conventional modes of delivery are not available.

During the evaluation, it was shown that the radio broadcasts in form of "edutainment" make learning a fun and informative experience. It caters to a wide range of people with different needs and aspirations. The broadcast can reach parts of Somalia where conflict and fighting prevent other forms of educational delivery. Throughout the evaluation, various stakeholders were asked if they would like *Macllinka Raddiyaha* to continue, and there was overwhelming support for the programme. The radio teacher is a novel and successful initiative – it provides access to education to some of the most marginalised and excluded from society and raises the public consciousness on very important themes and issues that are crucial to development.

2. A strategy needs to be devised to expand SOMDEL further to target two distinct groups:
(i.) Children of school-age in remote and rural areas with community support .Special emphasis should be in areas where there are no functioning schools and to devise ways to reach more out-of-school children. Major obstacles to this recommendation are the inaccessibility of communities, lack of transport and the lack of qualified teachers. More community involvement would instil a greater sense of ownership into the programme.
(ii.) Male youth who have missed out on education. SOMDEL should also strive to focus on the young men who have not benefited from education. This, however, is a difficult group to target for a variety of cultural reasons.

3. Programme Pointers
A set of pointers emerges from the evaluation for improving SOMDEL programmes. These are:

? To provide further training for teachers on the concept of distance education.

? To stress the importance of the audio aspect of the programme as a significant component of the SOMDEL material to the learners.

? To compile a uniform template in Somaliland, Puntland and southern Somalia for the collection of statistical data on each learner during registration. The learner profile form should include the name, gender, age and date of enrolment. This will provide useful information for the AET database. If possible, teachers should also notify AET of drop-outs.

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? To award the volunteer teachers with a certificate for participating in the SOMDEL programme.

? To devise an examination to measure the learner's literacy and numeracy skills.

? To improve the monitoring of SOMDEL classes throughout the country and t o keep regular monitoring and evaluation reports.

? To prepare an audio cassette library of the SOMDEL broadcasts so teachers and learners can have regular access to the programmes. This would enable teachers to play the cassette at their convenience and avoid conflict over the timing of the broadcast, the conflict with prayers, and poor transmission of a programme. It would also allow a teacher to go at his or her own pace. In some areas, SOMDEL classes started much later than those in Hargeisa.

? To provide SOMDEL staff with research training skills. Action research could benefit the programme as well as to improve the skills of the individual staff members.

? To improve the distribution of workbooks and to make the materials more robust.

? To distribute the radios more efficiently.

? To provide the learners with pencils and exercise books.

? To improve rapport and communication between the AET office in Hargeisa and offices in Puntland and southern Somalia.

? To promote SOMDEL and to work with other non-government organisations throughout Somaliland , Somalia and in neighbouring countries where there are Somali - speakers and to keep them informed of SOMDEL achievements.

? To conduct further research to examine the impact of SOMDEL in refugee camps and among the "listeners" throughout Somalia and Somaliland.

The report concludes that SOMDEL has a lot of promise to deliver literacy, numeracy and life skills to thousands of disadvantaged people. SOMDEL is a flexible and adaptable approach to literacy and empowerment, and in the long term it is hoped that SOMDEL will assist in the alleviation of poverty through access to basic education for all.

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Appendix1 – Schedule of Activities

Date	Activity	Key personnel
20/02/03 Hargeisa	Arrive from London Meet with Emily Oldmeadow Visit 2 SOMDEL classes	AF, EO Ali Jama and Ismail
21/02/03 Hargeisa	Lunch with Hassan Plan of Action with EO IMeeting with Hassan	AF, EO,
22/02/03 Hargeisa	Meeting with SOMDEL Regional Managers Meeting with AET research officer DIY solar presentation Meeting with Research assistant- MoE	AF, Ali Jama, Ahmed, Ismail, Mohammed W.
23/02/03 Hargeisa	FG with teachers from Hargeisa (23) Visit to 4 SOMDEL classes	AF, Ali Jama and teachers Dauud
24/02/03 Berbera	Meeting with Regional Education Manager and SOMDEL regional officer In-depth interviews with 2 learners – case studies Visit 8 SOMDEL classes: discussions with Learners	AF, Ahmed, Jama
25/02/03 Buroa	FG with teachers from Buroa Visit to 2 SOMDEL classes	AF, Ahmed
26/02/03 Hargeisa	Meeting with Ali Jama Plan trip to Puntland	

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	Meeting with Hargeisa research team	Ali Jama, Dauud and Habiba
	Interviews with female prospective listeners	
27/02/03 Bossasso, Puntland	Travel to Puntland Meeting with AET staff in Bossasso	Hawa and Abdi
	Visit to 7 SOMDEL classes Listen/Observe BBC Broadcast	
	In-depth interview with Ismail About Southern Somalia	
28/02/03 Bossasso, Puntland	Meeting at AET office	
	Focus group discussion with SOMDEL teachers	
1/03/03 Hargeisa	Echo flight to Hargeisa	
	meet with Hargeisa research team	
	Discussion with Michael Brophy, Director AET	
2/03/03 Borama	FGD with SOMDEL teachers	
	Visit 4 SOMDEL classes	
3/03/03	Meeting with outreach officer from Erigavo	
	Briefing of main findings with AET staff	

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Appendix2 : Focus Group Discussions with Teachers

1. Focus Group Discussion with Teachers in Hargeisa

<u>Why do girls come to SOMDEL classes</u>?
Because there is no school fee and that it is the afternoon (a convenient time).

SOMDEL learners are mostly female because of the cultural belief against female education. Most boys went to conventional schools

<u>Why do girls drop out</u>?
No textbooks, too old and want to sit around, marriage, domestic house -work and family problems and some are "ashamed"

<u>Training workshop</u>:
2 days/2 workshops
Most of the teachers had received some training and had attended a workshop. The male teachers suggested more training which included seminars on specific topics such as breastfeeding and nutrition.

Unanimously they said that the training they received was not sufficient.
When probed and I asked why?
They want more skills, experience and basic pedagogy
More technical knowledge of distance education mode and how to teach with this mode.

They would also like to receive payment for attending a meeting.

Curriculum to be expanded and to include the following topics:
Economy, corruption, literature, stories, infectious diseases and prevention
Role play in order to teach a concept
Sanitation and HIV-Aids, child rights, human rights and women's rights
Kat chewing and tobacco
Curriculum enrichment should include conflict resolution and peace
Social exterminated communities ; minority groups; upgrade agriculture

<u>BBC Broadcasts</u>
Time is now 5.30; the majority of teachers said it should be changed to 4.30 or 5pm. Or to have it on another day. It was thought that Thursday is not a good day as it is the beginning of the "weekend".

One teacher mentioned that the students were confused about the programme i.e what is in the books and what is broadcast

All thought that the drama aspect of the programme was very good and that it reached a wide range of listeners.

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Teacher guide: main themes
Use of experts and professionals was very important; interviews with real people such as "patients" or those suffering from a particular illness/problem

To add some oral exercises on the programme and to include more songs and drama and radio plays because they were more interesting. (INFO tainment?)

Another topic that came up was that the broadcast should include more from Somaliland and the south and to use more local performers from Somaliland.

The first two programmes were very good and the best. They didn't think that the programmes were balanced by region

They didn't think the opening song was very good and that the beat should be better and that it was not "warming up the listener".

The programme is mad in isolation and there should be more actors/actresses from Somaliland in the broadcast.

What kind of incentives do you need as a SOMDEL teacher?
Money or some kind of reward.
Some said they would not continue in the second phase without renumeration or some sort of incentive. If they do not receive money, they would like to receive more training. They would also like to be involved more at the local level and teachers should also be interviewed and part of the programme.

They would like to receive a certificate that they taught the course for a year. They also suggested that students should also receive a certificate that they completed/did the SOMDEL course.

(Note: Some of the teachers mentioned that they use the SOMDEL materials in other classes that they teach.)

2. Focus group discussion in Buroa with 23 teachers: 13 male and 10 female.
How many of the teachers attended a training workshop? 13/23 attended a training workshop; the workshop was useful but the teachers indicated that they would like more training. Some of the teachers started late and missed the training workshop. 12 of the teachers are qualified teachers and teach in government schools.

What do they like about SOMDEL?
Use of radio helps more people to be informed and learn
The issues are good and provoke discussion
Materials and BBC broadcasts are parallel and complementary
Broadcasts can be heard everywhere
The course attracts more females, esp. over-age
Easy to understand

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People who missed out when young now have an opportunity
Project useful for nomadic people
Project helps disabled people to learn

How to improve the broadcasts?
Time is too short; it should be longer
If radios were distributed earlier, it would have helped
Visual aids should complement the materials
No one was given a radio
Time is inconvenient for female learners
To cope with regional differences the actors should come here or use local actors form this region

What do you think about the topics?
The topics are all good especially health, human rights and security
"The topic on female genital mutilation was particularly interesting because it is a subject that is not usually discussed openly and the argument was very persuasive and convincing"
Suggestions for new topics: agriculture, economic related issues, human rights, drugs, women's rights .

Only 8 of the 21 teachers have a class on Thursdays to coincide with the broadcasts

Have you encountered any problems with the Materials?
All teachers experienced a problem with books arriving late
Workbooks were distributed late and there is a scarcity of books
5 teachers have not received copies of book 7

How is the quality of the SOMDEL material?
The books are fragile and split
Print is not good
There are mistakes and errors
Pictures referred to in the text are not there
Binding is not good
Some are photocopied and the quality is very poor.
In book 6, the font is too small
Problem with the Somali language – there is a difference between the north and south
And the writing is different – for example – the word Adhi is referred to as Ari
They would prefer the Somaliland script

Why did you become a SOMDEL teacher?
Starting from grassroots and we must help our people
All volunteers
"to help our people" and "to share the word with the people"
"We must bring the old and the young together after the civil war"
"Those of us who know something should work together to help each other"

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"For society to understand and to be peaceful and to see and observe us. What we are doing is right."

Do you experience any problems?
Lack of chalk
Lack of equipment- chairs, tables, blackboards
Financial incentive – 1 year voluntary but feel they should receive an honorarium
10 of the teachers present rent a private room to hold the classes and would like some money to pay for the room (others hold classes at government schools)
If a teacher falls ill, there is no one to replace him/her
Students come and go as they please
Flexibility in enrolment causes difficulties

Who are your learners?
The majority of learners are female and over-age
They did not go to formal school because of the war and poverty.
They come to SOMDEL because it is free

How many classes do you hold per week?
6 classes/week in the afternoons because our learners are working in the mornings

How can SOMDEL be improved?
Issue certificates to those who attend now and to encourage new students to register
Teachers should be given an incentive to continue – an honorarium, radio and school furniture.
Rental of rooms should be paid by AET
All teachers should receive a certificate for teaching the course

(Note: The list of SOMDEL teachers held by the RM was incomplete. Records should be up-dated and maintained during regular monitoring visits.)

3. Focus Group Discussion in Bossasso, Puntland: 7 teachers 5 male, 2 female
Why did you volunteer to be a SOMDEL teacher?

- to help the needs of our community
- to volunteer now and maybe get a job in the future

How may teachers attended the training workshop?
3 out of 7 attended a training workshop.

Was the workshop sufficient?
More training should be given for knowledge and money

How did you hear about SOMDEL?
Through the School Board; Adult Education and the Department of Non-formal Education publicised it. Some heard about it on the radio.

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Do you encounter any problems with the materials?
Binding is not good
Not enough books
Cover is stiff and tears easily
Problems with distribution –No 7 book – no teacher guides and No 6. No student workbooks and 500 teacher guides.

What Topics do you like?
All the topics are interesting
Discussion among SOMDEL students of all of Somalia and have them talk on air
Sports and exercise should be included
Literature, songs and poetry

Broadcasts?
Radios were received very late
Quality of radio is poor
Local station has shut down by the local war lord
There is interference and the transmission was not good.

4. Focus group discussion with teachers Borama- 11 male and 4 female
Why did you volunteer to be a SOMDEL teacher?
To help our people
People were displaced and missed out on education
Government collapsed and we need to help

Who are the SOMDEL learners in your area?
Most of the students are over-age females who did not have a chance to go to school
Some are "house girls" who work in the morning and come to class in the afternoon

SOMDEL training workshops
2 days training were sufficient

Radio
Not enough radios
The time of the radio broadcast on Thursday evenings is fine

Structure of broadcast
Too short
The don't like the tune
Debate is good
Language- actors are all the same and monotonous and the same time and same dialect.
*The dialect does not reflect all of Somalia *

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<u>Topics</u>
All are good especially: the ones of health- hygiene, environment, female genital mutilation, infectious diseases, conflic t resolution and land conservation.

<u>Suggested topics for future programmes?</u>
Religious courses
Maths
Environmental issues
Plantations, mobilisation and culturally friendly with the env ironment

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Valediction

This essay has been written in the same spirit. It has no conclusion. It is not a set of rules to be followed by students or to be imposed upon other supervisors. Instead, it is a transient contribution to an interminable dialogue. It is not about destinations since, in education (unlike accreditation), these are never static. They are always disappearing over the horizon. Treat this text as a set of signposts worthy of consultation and revisitation, not as a doctrinal road map devoid of new horizons, short cuts, escape routes and resting places.

29th January , 1996

help to clarify the form and function of an academic discipline. But what is a university discipline?

Discipline

Liverpool University Department of Education exists within a University milieu. It is a primarily a site for study. Students, that is, study to become recognised as learned (not taughted). But universities also have another fundamental purpose. They are also accreditation agencies. Students seeking accreditation are expected to demonstrate, for assessment purposes, that they have acquired a discipline of study. To this end, their work is publicly scrutinised by accredited members of the Department of Education, the Faculty of Social and Environmental Studies and, ultimately, the University Senate and its nominees (i.e. external examiners). University life, then, revolves around disciplines of learning and assessment.

The word discipline, like disciple, comes from classical Greek. It denotes learning, not teaching. Further, the word discipline retained - and still retains - a double meaning. Every discipline of knowledge entails its own discipline. Students join (rather than attend) a university to gain access to a body or discipline of knowledge. But the pathway to that knowledge is, itself, a discipline. And, by the same token, each discipline of knowledge has its own discipline of learning and assessment.

All university disciplines are acquired through engagement with a selection of study resources. Moreover, a discipline is not taught in a didactic sense but, rather, is rubbed off, picked up, absorbed, embodied. Academic disciplines are promoted more by secondary socialisation than by direct instruction. Students seeking accreditation are more like apprentices than pupils.

For these etymological, social and historical reasons, a discipline cannot be imposed. Universities may be responsible for resourcing disciplines; but responsibility for their promotion and acquisition lies, respectively, with staff and students. Indeed, a significant surviving example of learner responsibility is that students still retain the privilege of submitting theses without the express approval of their supervisors.

As suggested, every discipline is both a body of knowledge and a means of acquiring such knowledge. In the Middle Ages, these attributes were embodied, for instance, in university provision for the liberal arts. By the Renaissance (c1500), the Latin word for art was close to the Greek word for discipline. An art was (and, to an extent, still is) a body of teachings (doctrine), as well as the pathway to such knowledge. By the eighteenth century Enlightenment, however, the relationship between discipline and teachings became less secure. Disciplines for the acquisition of knowledge began to be extended to include procedures for going beyond the frontiers of knowledge. In other words, a discipline of study was augmented by a discipline of research. Bodies of knowledge ceased to be closed; and the word 'doctrine' was retained for this older sense of a fixed, unyielding body of knowledge.

Research, therefore, is not about the reproduction or restatement of knowledge. Rather, it focuses on the dissolution, reformulation, extension, recasting and reconstitution of received knowledge. Thus, a research discipline has at least two elements: it relates to the re-presentation of received knowledge in new guises; and secondly, it includes justification of the processes that fostered the creation of such new knowledge. A thesis, then, is both a novel presentation and a comparative defence. It seeks recognition as a preferable account, a more comprehensive analysis, a better argument.

Towards a Good Read

A university thesis is an exercise in argumentation that can be communicated to, and appreciated by, a panel of examiners. To achieve these two purposes, I believe that a thesis in educational studies should aim to be a GOOD READ. Its preparation is an exercise in communication, not an exercise in representation or expression. A thesis written in Educational Studies does not merely record what the author knows, thinks, assumes, believes or proposes. It presents such claims in a form that can be comprehended by other (accredited) readers. And responsibility for fostering that understanding rests with the author of the thesis.

For me, this responsibility is discharged through the practices of writing and re-writing. I think about this task of clarification in three-dimensional, geometric terms. I envisage composition in terms of a tetrahedron or pyramid. My first draft is at the peak of the pyramid. I am the only person who can decipher its intended meanings. I then re-write my original text, giving more and more attention to its audience. Each version moves incrementally away from the peak of the pyramid. Its readability increases according to the size of the increment. But - and this is the point of the pyramidal imagery - the potential readership increases according to the cross-sectional area of the pyramid. Attention to readability has a multiplier effect. Each increment of readability, that is, greatly enlarges the pool of readers.

This readability-accessibility relationship also works in reverse. Such recognition is conventionally offered by journal editors and book publishers; but it may also be important to the work of external examiners. A good read not only communicates an argument, it also projects a sense of the writer's authority. Academic writing, like any other kind of writing, carries more than one message. The author's argument has undertones and overtones that, wittingly or unwittingly, are also communicated to the reader. A work is deemed to be authoritative not only because it is original but also because it is well written.

This duality of originality and elegance makes for a good read. But how is this poly-tonality to be established? By analogy with the pitch, key and rhythm of a piece of music, I think of academic writing as an act of composition. The text is woven (or textured) by reference to three elements: aesthetics, poetics and logic(s). The intention is to generate an argument that attracts (aesthetics), informs (logics) and moves (poetics) examiners to such an extent that, by reference to published criteria, they judge it to be above the threshold for an assignment, dissertation, masters degree or doctorate.

Aesthetics

The aesthetic elements of a text are those features that make it visually attractive. Aesthetic considerations might include the following:

1.Choose a type font that is not only legible but also attractive. I tend to use 'Times Roman' or 'Century Schoolbook'. These are more attractive because they are proportionally-spaced; that is, different amounts of space are allocated to each letter so that words flow rather than just accumulate. 2

.Letter height is also relevant to aesthetics and readability. If letters are too small, they cannot be easily tracked across the page. Thus there is psychological significance in the relationship between page width and line height - which is why newspapers use columns that allow them to use small letters without sacrificing text readability.

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3.Readability is also enhanced by using left-justified text
instead of left- and right-justified text. Equally-spaced fonts,
like Courier, appear spaced out if right- and left-justified -
as in this paragraph. Such spacing can be reduced by
hyphenation; but hyphenation always runs the risk of increasing
reader confusion and fatigue.
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4. If your word-processing application has the option, increase the readability of your text by adding an small additional space between the end of one paragraph and the beginning of the next. These spacers are called leadings after the strips of printers' metal (lead) that were hand set between lines and paragraphs. If you are unable to insert leadings, add an extra space between paragraphs. 5.Be sparing with font variants (i.e. bold, italic, underlining). Let your choice of words indicate emphasis. Too much highlighting detracts from the message of your text. Above all, avoid combinations of font variations (e.g. underlined bold). I find them aesthetically counterproductive, and wearisome to read.

6.Indented quotes should normally extend over more than two lines, and be single-spaced. Since the quote's derivation is indicated by indentation, it does not need quotation marks.

7. Words, phrases, or paragraphs omitted from quotes should be indicated by ellipsis points (....). An omission within a sentence is indicated with three dots; whereas an omission that includes one or more full stops is shown by four dots. Further reduction constitutes abridgement which should be indicated in the citation (e.g. Smith, 1994, p. 65, quotation abridged). Take care! Overuse of ellipsis point and abridged quotations may give the undesirable impression that quotes have been doctored.

8. Do not conflate quotation marks with so-called 'scare' quotation marks. Instead, use a font variation to draw attention to a word or phrase (e.g. italic, bold or underlining). If you do not have access to an italic or underlining facility, indicate scare quotes by preceding them with the adjective 'so-called'. By using such a modifier, you are indicating that such terms are in common currency. In addition, it may also allow you to distance yourself subtly (snobbishly?) from any endorsement of such formulations.

9. If emphasis is included in the original text there is no need to add 'emphasis in original' to your citation. As far as possible, let the quote speak for itself.

10. It is conventional to have a non-standard layout for the first page of a chapter. Typically, the chapter number and the title occupy the top third of the page. Copy a design to your own liking.

Poetics

This is a dimension of writing that is rarely discussed. It is most important. Much of my motivation for redrafting a text is negative. I am angered by other people's sloppy writing - and embarrassed by my own. I try not to circulate my own writing for comment until I feel that its shortcomings can be discerned. In return, my task in redrafting a text is to keep revising until the poetry starts to come. The key problem is that communication is based on meaning, not words. To give attention to the poetics of a text is, therefore, to give attention to the communication of meaning. For instance, I always have difficulty in writing until I have thought up an attractive lead-in and/or title. The accumulation of ideas is not enough. Consideration of style and elegance also intervene in other ways:

1.Try to make titles attractive as well as informative. Attractiveness stems from the title's capacity to intrigue potential readers. You might choose a play on words (e.g. Putting them in Their Places: a social history of the school desk), a question (e.g. Managing Schools in the 1990s: fordism by fiat?) or a gerund (e.g. Doing Research and Doing Justice: purpose and ethics in educational research). If all else fails (as it frequently does), keep titles short and informative. Omit redundant words, and give compensating attention to the selection of key words (e.g. those that will appear in bibliographic data bases like the British Education Index). Redundancies often includes words like 'education', phrases like 'A study of...', and modifiers like 'some' or 'a small sample of...'. Some Observations on the Musical Education of Nursery School Children Between the Ages of Three and Six is probably less arresting and authoritative than Music in Nursery Schools.

2. Subheadings, like titles, are advance organisers. They should be regarded as signposts not milestones. They are not merely markers between sections, they also prepare the reader for what lies ahead. They may simply be one-word summaries of the next section (e.g. Conclusion); but, better still, they also give a sense of the argument in the ensuing section (e.g. Notes Towards a Theory of Schooling).

3. Subheadings can be organised in different ways. The simplest approach breaks up a text that, aesthetically, would be too prolonged and dense. Write a complete text and then act as your own sub-editor, inserting subheadings at reasonable intervals. A contrasting way of organising subheadings is to regard them as part of a multi-level and nested account rather than a linear and unfolding argument. In the multi-level case, suibheadings operate as taxonomic markers and, in copy-editing terminology, are known as A-headings, B-headings, C-headings etc. Such subheadings do not merely follow each other. Each one also harks back to different levels of the argument. But harking backwards and forwards is much more complicated that inserting sequential subheadings. Taxonomic subheadings, therefore, need to include additional

information which reminds readers where they are among the different levels of the argument. The difference between A-headings, B-headings etc. is usually recorded visually. Different level of subheading appear in different places (e.g. centre page) and in different fonts, font sizes and font variations. Indeed, such typographic devices are sometimes combined with numerical devices (1, 1.1, 1.11 etc.). But as visual information obtrudes, the law of diminishing returns begins to intervene. Eventually, such markers detract from the argument, devaluing the authority of the text and its author. I rarely use taxonomic subheadings that refer to more than two levels. Equally, I eschew the subheading 'Introduction'. I believe that it is redundant at the beginning of a text. I tend to feel that its insertion (or retention) might be read as laziness on the part of authors who should have put more effort into selecting more informative signpost subheadings. Chapter titles serve this purpose at the beginnings of chapters. 4.Poetic considerations most vividly come into play at points in a text where the writer's voice is expected to predominate. The ventriloquising of other people's work is joined by a new voice - the author's. Such points conventionally occur at the beginning and ends of a text (e.g. prologues and epilogues) and/or in the beginning- and end-pieces of intermediate units of text (e.g. chapters). The writer's responsibility is to capture, synthesise or sum up what has emerged from the argument. Supported by previous work, this voice speaks out with legitimate authority (every thesis author is a world authority on their chosen topic). Well-chosen titles, for instance, should serve at least three purposes: (1) to capture the readers attention; (2) to convey a sense of the entire work; and (3) to draw attention to the author's authority. Indeed, judicious choice of words serves these purposes throughout a text. Recently, for instance, I spend some time - and several drafts - before I achieved a satisfactory synthesis in an argument. I was trying to put together a concise account of Socratic dialogue. But I encountered great difficulty explaining how such dialogues come to a conclusion. When stuck for words on such occasions, I usually have recourse to further reading. I looked back to a classic sources - Plato's account of The Death of Socrates (available as a Penguin book). It not only furnished me with an attention-catching example, it also supplied the concluding idea of my argument:

> Socrates engaged his listeners with provocative questions (e.g. about his forthcoming suicide). A reflective exchange took place. And, by such a dialogue, Socrates led his listeners to new levels of awareness, new states of learning, and new forms of truth. He engaged them, in short, until they had nothing left to say.

5.The selection, utilisation and editing of quotes also has an aesthetic dimension. It is sometimes assumed that quotations are merely logical units in a text, serving solely as supportive illustrations of the author's argument. But quotations, like titles, also do much to decorate a text and, in the process, to strengthen the authors authority. Quotes, therefore, can both tell (in a logical sense) and be telling (in an aesthetic or poetic). Gather your own nuggets into a notebook; and place them, very carefully, in your text. 6. 6. 6. Within the liberal arts - or its modern variant, arts education - poetics is part of rhetoric. It focuses on figures of speech (or 'tropes'). These are devices, like similes, metaphors and alliteration that, in fact, serve a dual purpose. They attract attention and they capture meaning. Well chosen tropes are distillations, but they can also serve as prisms or transducers. (I'm struggling here for tropes that are both apposite and understandable!) As prisms or transducers, tropes transfer meaning from one domain to another. As in phrases like 'life is a bowl of cherries (or bed of nails)' they represent phenomena - perhaps new to the reader - in a language drawn from a realm that is elready within reach of the reader. The author's (constructivist or Vygotskian) assumption is that tropes can provide readers with a bridge from the known to the unknown. But beware! Tropes can also serve as clichés. Overuse may reduce the authority of the author's voice.

7. At best, tropes are important in thesis writing because they serve a theory building function as well as a rhetorical purpose. Much theory is constructed around the imagery supplied by tropes - as in Rosenthal and Jacobsen's 'Pygmalion in the Classroom' model of teaching and learning, Rutherford's 'plum pudding' model of the atom; or Lorenz's 'butterfly wing' characterisation of chaos phenomena. Writing an assignment or thesis is probably no different from the answer that poet (and university librarian), Philip Larkin, gave to the question 'How do you write poetry?'.

Laconically he replied, 'line by bloody line'. 8.At a more mundane level, however, poetics is the art of selecting and ordering words. As with titles, I try to be direct and avoid circumlocution. Much of my redrafting hinges upon breaking up sentences into fewer clauses (or units of meaning) which I then strengthen, aesthetically and rhetorically, in the pursuit of clarification and impact.

Logic

This dimension of writing refers to the laying out or stringing together of the terms of an argument. I find this to be the most difficult - and most time-consuming - task of writing. It is concerned with turning a set of ideas into a narrative; that is, a set of linked statements that flow from a beginning, through a middle section, to some kind of conclusion, finale or epilogue. The key problem is neatly captured in a series of tropes used by Arthur Quiller-Couch in On the Art of Writing (first edition 1916). Imagine, he suggests, a regiment of soldiers lined up in ranks and files on one side of a river. They represent the state of the authors mind. Each soldier is a single idea in context. The writer's task, thereafter, is to get the ideas - and, as important, the context - across the river and duly reassembled in the reader's mind. There is, however, a single constraint. The bridge across the river is so narrow that it will only allow the passage of one idea at a time. How, then, should the writer proceed to marshal these ideas?

1.Envisage writing as forging a trail that the reader does not follows blindly but expectantly. Readers benefit not only from knowing where they have been, but also from gaining a sense of what is to come. I try to sprinkle my text with what, in different contexts, are known as trailers (in the filmic sense), advance organisers (in the psychological sense) and scaffolding (in the Vygotskian sense). 2.Titles, opening and closing paragraphs deserve careful attention for another reason. They are the point at which writers 'sign on' and 'sign off' with readers. They are as important as salutations and valedictions in letter writing. Such markers fill four functions. They set the reader at ease (the 'comforter' function); they excite the reader's attention (the 'hook' function); they prepare the reader for what is to come (the 'trailer' function) and, eventually, they discontinue narrative contact between writer and reader (the 'valedictory' function). Note, for instance, how the classic narrative structure - 'Once upon a time in a land far away....And they all lived happily ever after' - elegantly fulfils these functions.

3. After the title, the most important trailer in a dissertation or thesis is the abstract. If readers (or, more acutely, examiners) are not set at ease by your introduction, you may have difficulty keeping their attention through the rest of your text. Introductions serve as a bridgehead in the establishment of your academic authority. In the words of the central European maxim (cliché ?) : a task well-begun is a task half-done.

4. A further type of bridging occurs at the end of each subsection of your text. Concluding - or bridging - paragraph(s) should look both ways - backwards to what has gone before, and forwards to the next section.

5. Bridges are also necessary to the stringing together of paragraphs. Typically, there is a direct link between the last and first sentences of succeeding paragraphs. The simplest link operates by using demonstrative pronouns that restate the main idea of the previous paragraph (e.g. These notions about bridgeheads and bridging have a further significance. They...) Linkage is also achieved by use of conjunctions like: thus, accordingly, however, subsequently. These are legitimate logical markers but, as in the case of aesthetic markers (e.g. italics, bold), excessive use diminishes the authority of the text and author. I find that I use conjunctions as I craft an argument; but I am also self-conscious about removing them as I refine the text. Conjunctions, that is, can be discarded as additional attention is given to the selection, positioning and weighting of words.

6. Be sensitive, too, to the epistemological baggage packed around your arguments. An archetype of this problem is the non-rigorous, imprudent use of the word 'most' - as in 'most teachers in England and Wales are disenchanted with National Curriculum assessment arrangements'. In this case, 'most' implies a majority (for which a suitable citation should be given). When in doubt, I substitute 'many' for 'most'. The rhetorical strength of the proposition is

sustained but, as important, so is its logical force. A large number (viz. many) need not imply a majority (which is a higher order empirical claim). Indeed, such mis-use of quantitative terms offers sceptical examiners an easy target. It may stimulate them to probe further into the epistemological infrastructure of your text.

7. The avoidance of epistemological overload requires all kinds of linguistic finesse. 'Cyril Burt said' is not the same as 'Cyril Burt proved'. Claims of this kind need careful formulation, typically aided by Roget's Thesaurus (original edition 1852, available from Penguin). This catalogue is a compendium which provides for multiple shades of meaning. The Burt example, for instance, might also have substituted: suggests, indicates, purports, reports, asserts, postulates, argues, hints, claims, maintains, contends, remarks, demonstrates. Whenever I redraft, I pay particular attention to shades of meaning. I hesitate, reminded of Oscar Wilde, feeling 'that's not quite the right word'. If in doubt, I settle upon a weaker loading (as when I substitute 'many' for 'most'). I believe that attention to such detail is one of the best ways of strengthening the epistemological authority of a text.

8. Typically, the authority of a piece of academic writing derives from the author's reading and inquiries. But, in professional studies, there is another source of authority - the author's experience. Do not be afraid, therefore, to insert your own voice into what might otherwise be read as unsupported assertion (e.g. 'These earlier developments were, I believe, influential in the formulation of school closure policy in Liverpool'). Sometimes, too, you can strengthen the validity of your claims (e.g. 'As a coopted member of Liverpool Education Committee (1991-6), I became aware that...'). Like all markers, such claims from experience should be used with caution. They remain a weak substitute for evidence that can be publicly scrutinised. Moreover, excessive use of first person devices - albeit in the interests of passionate argument - can lead to ego tripping (viz. I.... I..... I.....) which may also lead to devaluation of the author's authority. [Indeed, a thesis has protestant, stoic roots; that is, emotion conventially takes second place to rationality.]

9. Ego-tripping has its own alter ego - name-dropping; that is, over-indulgence in the use of citations and referencing. The 1991-2 President of the British Educational Research Association, Michael Bassey, - criticised these practices in his Presidential Address (British Educational Research Journal, 1992, 18, 3-16). He felt that at least three (psuedo-)academic games were rife: 'genuflecting', sandbagging' and 'kingmaking'. He illustrated his argument with the following paragraph:

10. Piaget (1926) showed that children develop in stages and so it is no surprise to find that libraries for children are usually organised according to levels of complexity for readers (Adams, 1980; Brown, 1992; Collins, 1993). In planning this investigation we started with the view stated by Davidson (1981, p. 1) that any collection of writings is a library. In designing our questionnaire, we used a modified for of that used by Edwards (1987).

11. Bassey continued: I describe the reference to Piaget as genuflecting (meaning ritualistic obeisance to one of the founding parents of educational theory), the references to Adams, Brown and Collins as sandbagging (meaning adding inert defences to a statement to make it look secure) and the reference to Davidson as kingmaking (meaning giving undue authority to somebody by citing their unresearched utterance)....The purpose of references should be to support the claim to knowledge of the paper, not the claim to being well-read of the author (p. 13-14). 12.Like the formulation of titles and abstracts, signing off is also vital to the establishment of authority. My general thinking goes back to the notion that research is an open discipline. Doctrines may have conclusions; but research is more than the restatement or glossing of earlier doctrines. I tend, therefore, to have a different view of signing off. Readers and writers should feel that they have come to the end of a socratic engagement, not a one-sided oration. It is time to stop. There is nothing more to say - at the present. Both reader and writer appreciate an opportunity to digest what they have written and read. Their work has no end. It is left rather than finished. The unspoken hope, perhaps, is both parties might extend the dialogue - with each other or with different partners - when they have refreshed themselves.

Valediction

This essay has been written in the same spirit. It has no conclusion. It is not a set of rules to be followed by students or to be imposed upon other supervisors. Instead, it is a transient contribution to an interminable dialogue. It is not about destinations since, in education (unlike accreditation), these are never static. They are always disappearing over the horizon. Treat this text as a set of signposts worthy of consultation and revisitation, not as a doctrinal road map devoid of new horizons, short cuts, escape routes and resting places.

29th January , 1996

Counting

You are allowed to count in qualitative research. Ignore the comments of researchers who claim you are only doing qualitative research because you can't count (Sechrest 1992, p. 5).

Anything, no matter how vague it may seem, can be collected in numbers if you set up the questions or the categories of observations in ways that allow it, for example, you can convert, the following observation into numbers in a variety of ways.

The teacher asked Lalia, "How much is four times two?"

"Seven," said Lalia.

"How much is four times two, Ousman?" she asked.

"Eight," said Ousman.

She asked Mbengeh " How much is four times three?"

"Twelvee," said Mbengeh.

"How many times do I have to tell you, it's twelve, not twelve. You don't say the "e" on the end. Do you say fivee? No, you don't. You are a silly girl. Go and wash the blackboard. How much is four times nine, Lamin?"

"Thirty-four," said Lamin.

"Nearly right," said the teacher. "think a little more. It's the same as six times six."

"Thirty-six" said Lamin.

"Excellent" said the teacher. "Karafa, how much is four times seven?"

"Twenty-eight" said Karafa.

"Very good" said the teacher, "Lets clap for Karafa, children."

The children applauded.

Table 16-1 shows one way to collect the results of these interchanges in numbers.

Table 16-1. Teachers' Responses to Students' Answers

Response	Girls	Boys
Ignoring correct answer	1	1
Rewarding correct answer		1
Constructively helping with incorrect answer		1
Punishing incorrect answer	1	

Benjamin White (1984) used a nominal scale to present quantitative data that he had collected in qualitative form by interviewing people on husbands' and wives' roles in household decision making (Table16-2).

(Source: Kane, E. 1995. *Seeing for yourself: research handbook for girls' education in Africa*, Washington: Economic Development Institute, World Bank. pp 252.)

The Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme: an experiment with mixed-mode training

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Abstract

Malawi adopted free primary education in 1 994 following the democratic election of a new government. This resulted in a massive increase in the demand for primary teachers. Pre -career full-time teacher education was replaced by the Malawi Integrated In -service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP). This was a mixed-mode system where periods of college -based training alternated with distance and local levels support for training with a school base. The programme was introduced in 1997 and has successfully trained over 18000 teachers. This paper desc ribes the programme, and presents evidence on different elements of its implementation. It draws attention to its strengths and weaknesses and some of the conditions which need to be met to improve its quality.

Keywords: Malawi; Primary teacher education ; In-service; School-based training.

1.   Introduction

In much of the developing world teacher education is in crisis. Inherited systems of teacher education have proved increasingly unable to satisfy the dual demands for higher quality training and substantially increased output called for by commitments to universalise primary schooling (Ncube, 1982; UNESCO, 1997). Many education systems still contain high proportions of untrained teachers; at primary level most who enter teacher training will only have completed secondary school. The quality of primary schools is such that many are unable to provide a supportive professional environment for trainees of the kind possible where staff are fully trained and often graduates. Donor enthusiasm for new pedagogy, which frequently advocates learner-centred approaches, group work, attention to special needs, and a panoply of methods of training associated with best practice in rich countries, has sometimes sat uneasily with the realities of the training environment, the teacher education infrastructure, and different cultural and professional expectations of the role of the teacher. Much of the rhetoric of reform has been difficult to translate into real changes in practice.

The recent history of teacher education in Malawi illustrates some of the pressures and possibilities that confront teacher education in many parts of Africa. In 1994 Malawi changed its system of government after thirty years of authoritarian rule and democratically elected a new government. To support its commitment to poverty

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alleviation the government placed a premium on Free Primary Education (FPE). As a result, primary enrolments soared from 1.8 million in 1992/93 to 2.9 million in 1994/95 (MOE, 1997). This expansion required a rapid supply of teachers to teach the new curriculum in severely resource-constrained schools operating under the new political dispensation. In the first instance more than 18,000 secondary school leavers were recruited to become teachers, and many went through two-week orientation courses before being sent to schools to teach. The untrained teacher population increased to more than 50% of the teaching force in the primary schools.

At that time the capacity of the training college system was at most 3000 trainees per year, giving an output of new teachers over the two-year programme of about 1500 a year. Even if the college system could be expanded by building additional capacity, demand was so great, and costs so high, that any sustainable system had to provide training at lower costs (Kunje and Lewin, 2000). To meet this challenge, the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) was developed to provide training for secondary school leavers using a mixed-mode college and school-based programme over 24 months. This was the only way that the numbers in training could be large enough to meet demand.

This paper explores MIITEP to show its strengths and weaknesses and identify ways in which it might be improved. Further it draws attention to ways in which it might provide lessons relevant to other poor countries in their efforts to rapidly expand and improve the quality of new teachers.

2. Research questions and methods

This study focusses on the extent to which the aims of MIITEP were achieved in several key areas, drawing from the analytical framework provided by the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) Project[1]. The study discusses the following key questions:-

1. How far has MIITEP achieved its aim of mass producing teachers to meet the current demands?
2. What can be said about the quality of training the course provides in terms of the curriculum and its delivery?
3. How far has the mixed-mode of training been successfully implemented?
4. How did the various key players assume their new roles in the programme?
5. How far have the new learner-centred methodologies permeated the system?
6. How far can the costs of the new mode of training be sustainable in the short term?

The methods adopted in this study to explore these questions varied, and included inspection of documents, analysis of curriculum materials, examination results and the MIITEP data bases, as well as interviews, questionnaires, autobiographies, diaries and tests. Observation and physical checks were employed to assess the situation on the ground in the colleges and schools. A sample of the colleges was identified for on-site

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data collection, and key informants were identified in the colleges and in the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Teacher Development Unit (TDU), the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB), and EDMU. The key informants at the college level were college principals, tutors, and bursars. At the school level, samples were drawn from MIITEP students, qualified teachers and Primary Education Advisors (PEAs). Most of the information collected from trainees came from those in cohorts 1, 2 and 6 for reasons to do with the scheduling of data collection which had to coincide with periods of availability in colleges. Triangulation and cross checking were used.(See appendix for sample details.)

3.   MIITEP: the experiment

The crisis created by the need to train very large numbers quickly compelled the Ministry of Education (MOE) to depart radically from the conventional two-year residential pre-service training that was in place in 1994. MIITEP was to work through a three-month period in college followed by 20 months teaching in schools, leading to a one-month residential block prior to a certifying examination. This pattern allowed colleges to enrol three cohorts a year and to triple their output.

MIITEP also tried to respond to criticisms that existing methods of training teachers had failed to change in response to new developments in teacher education elsewhere, especially those reflected in the discourse that surrounded primary schooling and teacher education in rich countries. If FPE was not only to enrol all children but also give them access to schools where learning was more child-centred, activity-based and participatory in character, then the quality as well as the level of output of teacher education needed to change.

The MIITEP training manuals (TDU, 1996) emphasised new approaches to training.
> Trainees must be given the opportunity to discuss how they perceive the present classroom environment and in what direction change is needed. A commitment to change is necessary if the training is to be successful.

New teachers were to be trained as change agents by inviting them to:
> engage in participatory teaching and learning methods within the practice of classroom skills.

Trainers were to:
> Consciously avoid methods which are not participatory such as lecturing or dictating notes.

The programme that developed was shaped by external consultants from GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) and other agencies providing foreign assistance, working with local experts in curriculum development. It represented an experiment in a mixed-mode of training to mass-produce teachers while at the same time introducing new methods which, it was thought, would bring about more effective learning than that resulting from the didactic and transmission methods which were deeply ingrained in the education

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system. MIITEP assumed that schools would become the major training ground for new teachers and that they would be complemented by a distance mode of training and a short residential course. There were several elements to the course that made it attractive. Firstly, the structure would allow three cohorts to pass through the colleges every year, so that the numbers required would be produced much more quickly than the conventional college-based training. Secondly, the school was considered a potentially good training ground if qualified teachers would act as mentors to the trainees on a daily basis, and headteachers would work hand in hand with PEAs as supervisors at close range, providing clinical supervision and assessing progress. It was also assumed that tutors would provide the link between the activities at the school and the activities in college by visiting the schools once in a while. Thirdly it was assumed that the trainees would also benefit from the teacher development activities that were directed at improving the quality of teaching in schools for all teachers. Fourthly, the presence of trainees in schools would help reduce the high teacher-pupil ratios created by increases in enrolment due to the introduction of free primary education. These compelling assumptions convinced the government to adopt MIITEP as the most appropriate course under the existing conditions. As an experiment only six cohorts of untrained teachers were identified from the teaching force, leaving the rest for the subsequent training programmes, which would depend on the success or the failure of MIITEP.

Then curriculum materials were designed in the form of five Student-Teacher Handbooks, to be used both in the colleges and while studying at a distance, and an elaborate supervision programme was set up. The structures implied that all key players had to assume new roles. For example at the school level senior management teams needed to acquaint themselves with responsibilities as trainers while at the district level advisors needed to change their scope of supervision to align it with training activities. College staff needed to adjust to much shorter in-college training and providing support for distance learning.

3.1   Structure of the course

The structure of the course is shown in Table 1. During the first three-month residential period students are taught by tutors using the first three Handbooks and then assessed through examinations designed by TDU in conjunction with the Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB). College-based teaching practice is assessed by college tutors. For the next 20 months the students return to their teaching posts where they teach, attend zonal seminars, study by distant mode using the remaining Handbooks, and receive support and supervision from headteachers, qualified teachers, primary school advisors (PEAs) and college tutors. Finally the students go back to college for one month to do revision and sit for final examinations set by MANEB.

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Table 1 : Structure of MIITEP and Its Assessment

Period	Student Activities	Assessment
3 months	Resident in college	Teaching practice by tutors End of residential exam by MANEB
20 months	Teaching in schools supervised by heads, PEAs and tutors Study by distance mode Attend zonal seminars	Teaching practice by all supervisors Projects and assignments by MANEB
1 month	Review course work Write final examination	- Final exam by MANEB

The MIITEP programme allowed colleges to admit three cohorts of trainees per year. After two years six cohorts would be enrolled totalling about 18,000 teachers in training. The annual output of the two-year programme could therefore be about 9000. The first cohort started in January 1997 and was planned to finish in December 1998, while the sixth cohort started at the end of 1998 and finished at the end of 2000.

3.2 The entrants

MIITEP was designed for trainees who had completed four years of secondary school and obtained the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). In addition it was required that entrants should have taught in a primary school for at least a year. However the supply of MSCE holders was insufficient to fill the cohorts. Consideration was therefore also given to those who had attempted MSCE examinations and those who had completed two years of secondary school and obtained a Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) (two years secondary). A large proportion of both MSCE and JCE holders in Malawi have attended Distance Education Centres (DECs). This means that many of them are likely to have accumulated their passes in different subjects over several years. It might easily therefore be five years since they had studied a particular subject, giving them a weak academic background for the MIITEP course. In addition, having studied only one or two subjects a year, they were ill-prepared for an extremely intensive three-month residential course. Table 2 shows the qualifications of MIITEP trainees.

Table 2: Qualifications of MIITEP Trainees and Other Untrained Teachers

Cohort	MSCE	JCE DEC	JCE Govt	MSCE DEC	MSCE Govt	Other	Total
1	14	9	7	615	1659	25	2330
2		1654	880	55	44	1	2636
3	12	707	200	421	1166	17	2526
4	1	1717	645	75	47	2	2491
5	5	1117	447	248	663	9	2494
6		1776	646	63	112	8	2611
Total	32	6980	2825	1477	3691	62	15067
Untrained	1	5561	1928	314	611	24	8439

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Grand Total							23506

Over 86% of trainees are under 30 years old and about 13% are between 30 and 40 years old. Males outnumber females by 13,820 to 9,880 across all the cohorts. Nationally 39% of primary teachers are female.

The MIITEP data base shows that about two-thirds of untrained teachers are located in schools which have more than 50% untrained teachers. Data on small schools with enrolments of less than 500 indicates that well over three-quarters of the untrained teachers in these schools are in schools which have less than 50% trained teachers. Looked at another way, 13% are in schools where more than 80% of teachers are untrained, and 48% where more than 60% are untrained. Only 5% are in schools where there are less than 20% untrained. We can also note that about 44% of untrained teachers teach in schools where pupil-teacher ratios are more than 60:1. Only 15% are in schools where the ratio is less than 40:!.

The physical conditions of the schools where MIITEP trainees are located are often poor. 11% were posted to schools with no permanent classrooms, 19% to schools where there were less than one-third the number of classrooms to classes, 39% where there were between one-third and two-thirds, and 18% where there were between two-thirds and enough classrooms for each class. This profile of where MIITEP teachers are teaching is very significant. It draws attention to the extent to which training should prepare new teachers to work in schools where there are few trained teachers, large classes, few classrooms and limited support.

3.3   Inputs

Support for training activities which surround MIITEP – e.g. training of trainers, PEAs, headteachers was supported by the MOE and by German Technical Cooperation and a World Bank loan. External assistance supported the production of five Student-Teacher Handbooks and other guidance and learning materials, and provided three long-term experts and funds for short-term international consultancy, study tours, and project management along with office support costs, including vehicles and computing equipment. The original agreements provide for MK74 million loan assistance drawn from the International Development Association (IDA) support for the Primary Education Project as a whole (World Bank, 1995). This amounted to about US$5 million. GTZ agreed to contribute DM 4.5 million as grant aid.

Before the programme started a series of training seminars were conducted to orientate headteachers, PEAs, tutors, and district education officers (DEO) in their new roles as trainers and coordinators. Issues such as professional development, action research and organizing and conducting INSET were introduced to the trainers. As mentioned above, five Teacher-Student Handbooks, representing all the resource material for both trainers and trainees, were written, produced, and made available gradually to all students in the colleges.

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It should be noted that MIITEP assumed that the residential college components would be conducted in all the six teacher training colleges without additional resources apart from the training manuals and Handbooks. A two-week orientation course was offered to all tutors, but otherwise they were expected to operate as in the past, the only difference being that three cohorts would pass through the colleges each year. No other new resources were made available.

However, MIITEP has benefited from support provided by other projects. Thus, for example, the Malawi School Support Systems Programme (MSSSP) was to train PEAs and heads and deputy headteachers, establish the Teacher Development Centres (TDCs), and support in-service programmes, all of which complement the MIITEP activities. Unfortunately when MIITEP started the infrastructure of these support systems, which included TDCs and transport for PEAs, was not all in place, which had far reaching repercussions on the programme.

3.4 Comment

Before discussing the data on the implementation of MIITEP the following points are of interest. First, MIITEP was intended to be part of a comprehensive Teacher Development Programme in the Ministry of Education within the national Policy Implementation Framework (PIF). It was supported by the government and external agencies on this basis. This also implied that a policy on teacher education would be developed. To date this is still embryonic. Neither is it clear how the programme will become sustainable without external support

Second, the advantages of MIITEP, in terms of the increased output from this model of training, were seen to be compelling, and it was adopted. However MIITEP assumed many things for its successful implementation. To produce the desired output, cohorts had to be selected and admitted into MIITEP on a regular basis according to a demanding time scale. Every four months a new cohort was needed. Further, as cohorts built up, college staff were to be involved in managing the progress of all the cohorts through the programme and providing distance support. This load increased dramatically as successive cohorts were enrolled.

We can note that amongst the radical changes MIITEP tried to encourage were the following:

- ?? The school was to become the focus of training
- ?? A new approach to teacher education curriculum was to be implemented
- ?? The delivery of the curriculum was to be decentralised to different locations
- ?? The number of key players involved in the training was to be increased

All these features placed a double burden on those involved. Not only was the volume of training to be dramatically increased, but at the same time a radical shift in process and content was anticipated. New approaches to professional learning had to be understood by all the stakeholders, there were new demands to coordinate learning across a range of sites and between college staff and those at the district, zonal and school level, and all

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this whilst teachers were becoming accustomed to the implications of a more democratic state. To make matters even more difficult, from the mid-1990s Malawi was starting to experience the effects of high rates of infection of HIV/AIDs which began to have an impact on teachers and the support structures for MIITEP. Under these conditions it is not surprising that problems began to emerge in the implementation.

The findings of this study are presented under topics and discussed around themes to show what was supposed to happen and what did happen instead. The effects of what actually happened are explained in the context of the availability of resources and institutionalized procedures. The topics treated are the curriculum and its delivery, school-based training, assessment, the impact and the cost implications.

4.   The curriculum

Curriculum documents from the last decade show that teacher education courses have changed little in approach or content, though they have been getting shorter. Similarly, much of the MIITEP content is a condensed version of older syllabi. However, some MIITEP documents do indicate an intention to use new strategies for teaching/learning, more in keeping with the aims of the revised primary school curriculum, which advocated more active and participatory learning methods. Indeed two strands of thinking can be traced within the new course, which for convenience have been labelled "traditional" and "progressive". The traditional strand is teacher-centred, based on behavioural assumptions, has a closed view of knowledge, and sees the teacher as a technician. On the other hand the progressive strand contains some elements of interactive and constructivist thinking, is more learner-centred, less authoritarian, and expects more of teachers. These are broad tendencies only, and should be understood as relative to the Malawian context. The coexistence of the two strands in the curriculum was perhaps inevitable, considering the capacity to adopt new practice and internalise unfamiliar pedagogy and professional practice (Stuart and Kunje, 2000).

The content of the MIITEP programme, based on subjects taught in primary schools plus foundation studies, is set out in the five Student-Teacher Handbooks. A close scrutiny shows a lack of common strategy in the way different subjects are treated. For example in English students are taught a series of pedagogic skills fitted around the primary school syllabus, while in science students are taught straight subject content, and in mathematics pedagogic skills and subject content are taught together. Considering the academic level of the trainees, as indicated by their qualification levels, there is a need for a more consistent approach to ensure that teachers would have a good understanding of their subjects and how to teach them. A systematic focus on upgrading the student's knowledge across all key subjects should instill confidence to teach all levels of the primary school.

The research showed that most tutors use the Handbooks exclusively as source books and teachers' guides, making little or no reference to other materials. Students were not being adequately prepared for self-study, although for 20 months they would be based in

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schools, having to write assignments, carry out project work and study at home in preparation for final examinations. In addition to this the professional skills needed to carry out school-based tasks are not given prominence in college. Interpersonal communication skills, action research methods, and report writing are either mentioned in passing or not elaborated at all.

Except for its condensed nature, the curriculum differs very little from previous courses taught to school-leavers with no teaching experience, yet MIITEP students have all taught for between one and three years. The curriculum makes very little use of this experience, and tutors often seem to be treating students as empty vessels into which knowledge must be poured. The need to cram so much into too short a time reinforces a didactic mode of teaching, and leaves both the students and the tutors dissatisfied with the course and with each other.

4.1 Curriculum delivery

In the college classroom there are several points that need highlighting. All tutors observed kept to their timetables and made visible efforts to make up for any time lost, even holding extra lessons trying to cover all the suggested topics before the examinations. Certainly there is too much material to cover but it was disturbing to find as much as 20% of lesson time being wasted on non-teaching activities. Also many classes were doubled up (so that parallel groups were taught together creating large class sizes of up to 80), even when the average teaching loads were 12 - 13 periods a week. The reason given for this was that the tutors were engaged in other MIITEP activities such as marking distance-mode assignments and projects, and needed to economise on contact time with student trainees in college. Smaller classes would have made interactive teaching easier. Where students had been told to prepare in advance, the lessons were lively and there was scope for using more participatory methods, but this was the exception rather than common practice.

The overall resemblance of college work to traditional secondary school teaching was noticeable, and may reflect many tutors' experience and expectations. The methods used were mainly expository, intermingled with question and answer sessions, with some rudimentary group work. For example in one lesson on "Using Supplementary Reading Materials" one tutor spent time going through the different types of reading materials without showing any of them and this was done in a whole class question and answer routine. For more than half the time the students were just sitting and watching the tutor. There was a demonstration of a book box but this only involved six students in a class of more than thirty. Time was wasted finding out how the locks worked. Only at the end did it transpire that some of the students had already used such boxes during their time teaching in school. In general the questions were of a low cognitive level and often closed, students answering in one word or in chorus. Some tutors gave students notes, contrary to the advice given in the training manual.

On the whole the course in action seemed to be about transmitting knowledge, rather than facilitating professional learning through reflection on theory and practice. It reinforced the authoritarian rather than the dialogic approach since there was little encouragement

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for students to argue or challenge.   From what they said and did in class, students did not seem to believe in or value their own experience as pupils, teachers and even as parents. When asked, they indicated that they had come to college to "learn the right methods" and felt they had little to contribute.

Our research revealed that the tutors were under-qualified, had few opportunities for professional development, and had received only a short and superficial orientation to MIITEP. Hardly any of them had taken on board the proposed paradigm shift to new ways of teaching and learning. In their view MIITEP was undermining their professional skills and knowledge by moving training into the schools, and was unlikely to produce good teachers. Although they performed their duties conscientiously, their morale was low, and many wanted to retire or leave teaching (Stuart *et al*, 2000).

Thus there seems to be a discrepancy between the progressive philosophy expressed in some of the general aims of MIITEP, and the more traditional approach that comes through in most of the units and in the curriculum delivery. Overall MIITEP advocates student-centred and participatory learning methods that should produce an innovative, progressive and professional teacher. This contrasts with the tight behavioural objectives, the closed, didactic nature of much of the material, and the transmission modes that predominate in the college classroom. Therefore we have a situation where elements of the new course seem to militate against its effective implementation.

5. School-based training

The bulk of the activities in MIITEP were concentrated in the school-based phase. This is important because the success of the programme hinges on how the various key players took on their new roles as trainers. Experimenting in mixed-mode requires that the various components should work in unison, with one treatment feeding into another, and that the overall outcome is the result of all treatments and not separate treatments. School-based training assumed that the school would provide enabling conditions with supervision from headteachers, qualified teachers, PEAs and college tutors.   Zonal meetings were scheduled to provide a continuation of formal study using the Handbooks and the PEAs as facilitators. The last two Handbooks have to be used as self-study modules, and the written assignments and project work represent the distance-mode component.

5.1 School support
The headteacher at a school was expected to make the training arrangements. These include allocating students to appropriate classes, providing the necessary teaching and learning materials, and offering professional support through mentoring, supervision and conducting workshops.

According to TDU (1996):
> Experienced teachers are expected to assist students in their day-to-day work wherever possible. Some experienced teachers may be assigned by the head to supervise the teaching of some MIITEP students.

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In the first place the schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials to support a student for classroom practice. Arguably this condition encouraged students to appreciate the virtue of being resourceful, but it was hardly the most desirable situation. It was apparent that students did sometimes improvise some teaching and learning materials, but it was virtually impossible to do this for basic materials like teachers' guides, textbooks, syllabuses etc. The proposed Teacher Development Centres (TDC) were not fully operational for most of the cohorts, and this made students' teaching practice supervision and support difficult.

Staffing conditions at the schools affected how much the schools could organise support from qualified teachers. In six out of thirteen case study schools the untrained teachers outnumbered the qualified teachers. The situation was exacerbated by the inability of headteachers to fathom how best to mobilize support under such conditions. Only in one school were teachers paired with trainees to work together as a strategy. In other schools this was done merely as a means of reducing the workload of both qualified and untrained teachers and not as a training strategy, although it proved beneficial to the students. Where pairing was not possible because of low staffing levels, students had to teach full loads. (See Kunje and Chirembo(2000) for more details).

Class allocation was another way of facilitating the training of students at the school level. TDU had recommended that students be given the junior section and not the infant and senior sections of the school in order to let students handle classes where management and content would not be too challenging for them. However, staffing conditions did not permit this. Instead headteachers claimed they allocated students the same way as qualified teachers to classes according to competence, interest and other prevailing conditions. It was noted that only in two schools in the sample did the headteachers conduct workshops for students as MIITEP expected. Headteachers claimed there was too much work and too many students and it was difficult to find time for this activity.

One area where schools did better in training students was in management issues. In all schools students were given responsibilities in various school committees such as those for examinations, discipline, sports, beautification and even in school development committees. In some schools students were asked to conduct assemblies for the whole school. In this regard, school-based training was seen to make a positive contribution to the overall preparation of the teachers under MIITEP. However it should be pointed out that this support was not offered as a deliberate strategy, but rather as a way of easing pressure on all the teachers by distributing duties evenly.

5.2   Supervision
All heads were aware of what TDU required of them regarding supervision of students. Most heads drew up supervision timetables but only managed to visit each student once or twice in the term. According to MIITEP headteachers, deputy heads and other experienced teachers were expected to visit each student at least four times a week! Clearly this was not happening according to plan. Perhaps the demand was somehow

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unrealistic. If we take one school with ten students it means that forty periods a week would be devoted to supervising students and at the same time the head would have other engagements to attend to. One headteacher summarised this situation when he said

> … We were advised to visit them according to a given number of
> times but could not manage. There is too much work. I teach, I am
> head and there are many of them… We are doing a good job but
> this job is for tutors and PEAs. We were told they would give us
> some incentives but we get nothing in return. Tutors stay in college
> doing nothing while we are working with their students.

Therefore supervision by headteachers needed careful planning as well as commitment on the part of the qualified teachers in order for it to work well. In any case there was no financial recognition for this work and there was no penalty for not doing MIITEP work properly.

According to TDU (1996) PEAs are expected to visit each student in their zones at least twice a term to assist them in preparing teaching/learning aids, supervise them and keep track of their progress. This does not happen. PEAs have other duties to perform besides MIITEP tasks, such as supervising qualified teachers, inspecting schools, maintaining Teacher Development Centres and organizing in-service seminars for schools in their zones. Apart from these tasks PEAs are requested to attend workshops on crucial issues such as AIDS, gender awareness, environmental degradation, etc. which are not scheduled. They were also undergoing training with MSSSP. So supervising more than 20 students in a zone twice a term is difficult to achieve. Only in one school was there evidence of real supervision. PEAs had visited this school three times in the term, each time drawing attention to specific areas and making reference to previous discussions. In most other zones the PEAs visited merely for assessment and not supervision.

In the case of college tutors, TDU expected them to supervise each student at least five times in the 20 months of the school-based phase, to assess students' performance and give a grade. But the structure of the training programmes allowed little space for tutors to leave college and follow their students into schools, particularly as they were scattered countrywide. As a result tutors were not able to visit all their students even once. Because of the time constraint, they were not able to advise the trainees but only able to assess them in order to give a teaching practice grade. On most occasions this was a hurried exercise. With about 150 lecturers in colleges, not all of whom supervise teaching practice, and as many as five cohorts in schools at once (15,000 trainees), the impossibility of maintaining the planned visit schedules is obvious.

In summary, it can be seen that tutors' visits were much less frequent than planned, and the supervision that ensued was not helpful. There was no coordinated approach, each supervisor having his or her own way of doing things. In the end, this proved a futile but expensive charade. Some of this can be attributed to unrealistic goals, poor planning, and lack of support on the part of TDU and other agencies. Late deliveries of support services which MIITEP was to utilize from other projects compounded the difficulties.

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5.3 *Zonal workshops*

Each cohort is expected to attend 12 zonal workshops in the 20 months of school-based training. PEAs were charged with the task of organizing them and also acting as facilitators or trainers. Specific topics in the Handbooks were identified for formal study at these workshops.

The zonal meetings observed were more in keeping with the spirit of MIITEP where participatory methods were advocated. They represented a forum where students shared their experiences and received clarification on matters concerning their course. Unfortunately, the costs involved in assembling all students in a zone meeting proved complex to administer and unsustainable, and as a result only a few of the planned meetings took place for each cohort. Why this happened is difficult to explain, since funds had already been earmarked for these activities, but they appear not to have been released in a timely way.

5.4 *Distance mode*

The distance-mode component involved writing 12 assignments and four projects, which were sent back to the respective colleges for marking. This was termed the distance mode because the assignments and projects were to be sent back to respective colleges for marking; there was, however, no provision for tutors to send feedback to students. In addition, this meant that the students did not get feedback on their understanding of what they were reading in the self-study section of the Handbooks. Therefore, this section of the course was in practice independent study, without the support through correspondence that would be expected of a distance-learning course.

In general the work required the students to collect information but did not require them to use their classes and the school to relate theory to practice. The assignments and projects offered a wide choice of topics of varying levels of difficulty, complicating the validity of marks given to individuals. For example in one year the projects required students to choose one topic from the following, and to write a report on it:

?? To learn to drum
?? To make clay models
?? To develop a personal programme to enhance one's football or netball skills
?? To organise a community service project
?? To carry out local research into traditional dances or spirit possession

Students found the exercises tough because of the lack of resources like libraries in the schools and communities, and qualified teachers offered very little help because the tasks were also new to them. For students who had full teaching loads time proved a rare commodity; it was even harder for women, who also shoulder heavy family and community responsibilities in developing countries.

6. Assessment

The course has elements of both formative and summative assessment . Exercises in the Handbooks and college tests constitute formative assessment, but we found few

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departments keeping regular records of marks to monitor student progress. Summative assessment is continuous, in that examinations in all 12 subjects are given at the end of the residential course as well as at the end of the two years, and grades from assignments and project work are collected over the school-based phase. Teaching practice is assessed both during residential at schools attached to colleges and during school-based training but the grade given in the latter case is the one which is used. The weighting and timing of the assessment is given in Table 3 below:

Table 3: MIITEP Assessment

Timing	Method	Weighting
End of residential block	?? Written examinations In all subjects ?? Teaching practice	25%
School-based training	?? 12 assignments ?? 4 projects ?? Teaching practice	15% PASS/FAIL
End of Course	?? Final exams in main subjects	60%

Candidates are awarded a certificate if they pass English, mathematics, science and health education, foundation studies and teaching practice plus two subjects from a set of electives. Any one failing teaching practice fails the course. All the formal written assessment is set by MANEB and marked by tutors under MANEB's supervision.

6.1   Examinations, assignments and projects

Formal assessment methods are consistent with some aspects of the new curriculum and not others. The written exams and assignments are closely matched to the contents of the Handbooks and set up to test the same kinds of lower level skills mentioned in the specific objectives set out therein. In effect, the exams test mainly recall, since many of the comprehension and application questions could be passed by memorizing the examples given in the Handbooks. Even though some of the project work appears quite demanding, none of the tasks are directly related to the students' work in the classroom, and they are assessed merely by written report, with no apparent requirement to produce artifacts, or demonstrate acquired skills.

On the other hand the aims and general objectives which set out the "progressive" vision of MIITEP are poorly reflected in the assessment patterns as a whole. The emphasis on innovation and on learner-centred attitudes and skills is ignored, in spite of the 20 months school-based training which could have been used to develop and assess these through different kinds of project and portfolio work. The "new approaches" mentioned as general objectives appear only in the written exams, so there is no assessment of whether the new teachers can or do use these ideas effectively in their teaching. It seems paradoxical that the exams attempt to test pedagogic knowledge and skills, while most of the school-based assignments test subject content knowledge: the reverse would seem more appropriate.

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6.2   Teaching practice

During the residential period, each student teaches in the demonstration school only once, but by the end of the stay in college they will have observed at least ten other students teach. At the end of each session, tutors and students discuss the lessons observed. The tutor awards a grade by using an assessment instrument with 25 skills which are marked on a 0-4 range. This grade does not carry much weight because it is only used in the event that school-based assessment is not available. In schools assessment is done by headteachers, PEAs and tutors, so that at the end there are three grades available which are combined to give one final grade. All the trainers use the same instrument.

While it is important to standardize the scoring procedure, the instrument used in assessing teaching competence is restricted to a few classroom competencies, and does not capture school-wide activities which are also important. Unfortunately, too, the instrument does not focus on the participatory approach advocated in the curriculum. MIITEP is using an old assessment procedure which is incompatible with the new programme. There are also indications, from a small set of observations carried out during our study, that assessment of teaching practice is unreliable. This may not be surprising given that tutors are not trained in assessment, and no moderation techniques are used to improve inter-judge reliability.

7. Impact of the course

Tests, classroom observations, end-of-course results and interviews provided indications of the effects the course was having on students and the system as a whole. Tests in mathematics suggested that after two years in the course the students' achievement remained low, signalling lack of progress[5]. The indications are that the mathematics they learn is sufficient to teach particular topics, but inadequate to give deeper understanding that could allow innovative and flexible approaches to teaching. In English the students could only speak what was written in the textbook but failed to explain or expand in their own words. They had a small vocabulary, poor sentence construction, and little ability to articulate. This was not surprising because the course did not offer remedial classes for these students, many of whom had very poor educational backgrounds. Even though the exams demanded low cognitive levels, the majority of the students scored low marks for academic subjects, including English.

In contrast the students received excellent grades for teaching practice, indicating that according to MIITEP the students were performing well as teachers. They satisfied the requirements of the assessment procedure adopted. However, as shown above the instrument used to assess teaching practice and the procedure for doing so raised doubts about the reliability and validity of the grades given.

Overall there are high completion rates in the range of 80% across the colleges. Almost all newly qualified teachers go back to their old schools mainly because reallocation attracts some expenses from district education offices. A few are sent to teach in the newly established secondary schools because of lack of qualified teachers in the vicinity.

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There are also cases where the newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are made headteachers, usually in schools where there are no qualified teachers.

The NQTs interviewed claimed they knew and used the new approaches to teaching advocated in MIITEP. They certainly displayed some participatory methods, especially the use of group work, but they seemed not to have mastered the dynamics of the methods, judging by the difficulties we observed in their use. Even if the NQTs are aware of the new methods, they are most inclined to use them when they are confronted by other teachers or supervisors. It certainly requires more time and more supervision to internalize a new approach, and the latter seemed to have not been readily available during training.

The schools offer some form of help to enable the NQTs settle in. Formal induction is organised, sometimes at the school and sometimes at the TDCs, where these are functioning. Our data suggest that schools readily accept the NQTs as colleagues; they are even regarded as "experts" in the new curriculum because they are the only teachers who have had a concentrated orientation to the new ways of teaching espoused in the new primary school curriculum.

8.   Cost implications

The cost of training a teacher under MIITEP can be derived from analysis of the components which constitute MIITEP. Investment costs like training of trainers and development of materials were borne by loans from World Bank and the grant aid under MSSSP. GTZ finances MIITEP activities for pedagogic support such as zonal meetings and school-based supervision. Colleges are run conventionally with funding from MOE. Detailed analysis of the costs directly benefiting the MIITEP students is available in Kunje and Lewin (2000). This shows that the recurrent cost of training a student in the existing programme is about US$593. If the bulk of the non-college costs were covered through other projects which provide collateral inputs, this might be reduced to US$370. In contrast, the cost per trainee of the conventional full-time pre-career course was estimated to be between three and four and a half times as expensive per student.

The analysis we have undertaken of costs and supply and demand reaches a number of conclusions. First, analysis of primary teacher supply and demand leads to a clear conclusion that only a method of delivery capable of yielding in excess of 7,500 teachers per year will come close to servicing the targets identified in the PIF. According to Kadzamira et al (2000) mortality rates due to HIV/AIDS among teachers are expected to rise because it is widely believed from the scanty data available that teachers are a high risk group. At the district level for example at least one primary school teacher dies in a fortnight due to HIV/AIDS or other causes. Teacher attrition is likely to increase, and therefore the greater the need for a high rate of teacher production. Current primary college capacity is of the order of 2,800 students. Under the MIITEP system, with three-month residential blocks three cohorts can be accommodated each year. Other modes of training with longer residential periods could only reach these levels of output if several

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additional colleges were constructed and staffed. They would have recurrent costs that could not be supported from the existing education budget.

Second, the number of staff in the primary teacher training colleges had dwindled to about 150 across six colleges. About half were within five years of retirement, many were under-qualified, and morale was disturbingly low. By 2001 about 40 new staff had been recruited, but appropriate induction and continual professional development will be needed if the colleges are to fulfil their role in MIITEP or its successor.

Third, teacher training college infrastructure has been degraded by persistent under-funding and irregular release of the recurrent non-salary budget. Maintenance has not occurred (to the point where TTCs have been closed for substantial periods). Learning materials apart from the MIITEP Handbooks are often absent or out of date, and other kinds of equipment often broken or not available.

Fourth, even school-based supervision and support for MIITEP trainees from colleges is expensive. At the time of the study it was not consistently organised, coverage was poor, and the value it added to the training of students was debatable, apart from the zonal workshops supported by the PEAs. Anecdotal evidence since then suggest that with the full implementation of MSSSP, including the training of headteachers and PEAs, it is closer to fulfilling its potential.

In a nutshell, the MIITEP structure remains attractive as the only method of training that is capable of meeting demand, yet even at its relatively low cost levels per trained teacher external assistance will continue to be needed to maintain it. The system could be much more cost-effective with attention to curriculum improvement, more efficient arrangements for school-based support, and a regular system of college funding that provided incentives to manage college resources to best effect. This study has pin-pointed elements of the course which militated against the attainment of quality. Now that the support systems which were late are functioning, the roles of the different trainers can be better defined. A modified MIITEP seems to be the best option in the medium term to service the requirements of the Policy Investment Framework and meet the teacher demand.

9. Conclusions

The insights developed here recognize the many varied forces associated with the design and implementation of MIITEP. Different stakeholders will interpret the findings from different perspectives. However, this study, and the research reports which lie behind it, do provide useful insights into a large-scale innovation in a deeply entrenched professional culture in the context of extreme resource constraints. This paper identified several questions that the research explored. We now return to reflect on these in a general discussion.

First, the aim of the innovation was to mass-produce teachers in line with the demand for new teachers. At the end of the four-year planning period all the six cohorts have passed through the system and about 80% of the 18,000 untrained teachers have been certified,

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though there were delays in completing the last cohorts. Most trainees are now qualified and are teaching. Under conventional programmes, this number of teachers would have taken 12 years to produce. Thus MIITEP has demonstrated that mass production of teachers can also be achieved.

Second, this success was partly compromised by the way the various key players assumed their roles in support of the trainees, and by the extent to which the various support systems have responded to needs. Many of the training activities which were planned either did not take place, or were done perfunctorily and hurriedly, without regard to the desired outcomes. Lack of time, finances and conviction seem to be the root of the problem. The quality of training leaves much to be desired. It has suffered from the lack of time for preparation and institutionalisation with the colleges. It may also have been too ambitious, given the aspiration to change radically the mode of delivery and the content of training at the same time.

Quality issues that remain unresolved include the tension between upgrading subject knowledge and acquiring professional and pedagogic skills, recognizing the prior experience and capabilities of trainees, and realising the level of support needed during the periods in school. The curriculum in action seems to have had little impact on trainees' academic competencies, though there is evidence that professionally some do demonstrate knowledge and skills in the use of new teaching methods. But overall there is little to suggest that trainees are confident or capable of transforming learning and teaching in schools. The trainees' poor educational background is only partly recognised in MIITEP. Their experience as teachers and parents is largely ignored. There is a need to support the development of study skills, some insight into reflective methods of professional development, and to improve achievement in English, mathematics and science.

Third, the mixed-mode approach adopted by MIITEP has been only partly successful. It was intended to create a synergy between tutors in college, PEAs at the zonal level, and headteachers. This has not been generally realised, partly because the curriculum was designed more for a residential course rather than for use in mixed-mode, partly because of the lack of adequate training for all involved. The infrastructural demands of the complex support system envisaged have proved unsustainable and unmanageable, with headteachers and PEAs often working in isolation. Distance elements of the programme have been lonely academic exercises with no element of feedback, or opportunities for sharing the experiences through seminars. Teaching practice has not been supported adequately and zonal seminars have withered because TDCs were late in functioning and financial and material support were not on schedule.

Nevertheless, MIITEP has produced Handbooks which have widely proved very useful and are even used by those not pursuing the course; these are probably MIITEP's greatest strength. Further, there were attempts to train and prepare all the key players, which reduced a lot of problems that would otherwise have ensued. School-based training has potential, evident in those cases where there was good practice and real supervision took place, and where productive workshops and zonal seminars were held. There is

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evidence that headteachers and PEAs could successfully be utilized as training partners at the school level if enough training, support and infrastructure are available. Though there are many shortcomings in the delivery of the curriculum, much has been achieved, and there is much to build on. Now that some TDCs are functioning and new additional tutors are being recruited in the colleges they can be integrated into the overall picture of MIITEP with a view to improving the quality of the training.

The creation of the TDU was a step forward towards a coherent policy on teacher education and its delivery. The recent establishment of a Directorate for Teacher Education within the Ministry consolidates this trend and should result in more efficient procurement of resources and infrastructural support. However MIITEP, as originally devised, requires a complex system of administration, financial management, and logistic coordination. The evidence suggests that simplification is required if the system is to work more effectively and within the realistic institutional capacity that is available.

In conclusion, MIITEP cannot be judged a success in terms of all the aspirations heaped on it. In particular the aims to combine a crash training programme with the implementation of radical new approaches proved unrealistic. On the other hand it is a system which has provided "certificated" teachers in quantities that no other method could produce. Without it pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools would probably have risen to over 100:1. It is an innovation that is of great interest to other poor countries grappling with the problem of training sufficient primary teachers to meet the demand of universal enrolment. It may not be the best system for producing high quality teachers in small quantities, but it is one that is capable of development to improve quality. If this is to happen it will be necessary to invest in regenerating the professional base of MIITEP in the colleges. Current staffing is inadequate and the numbers of teacher trainers are falling below the level necessary to support the programme. The current move to address this situation should be encouraged. College infrastructure and learning materials are in desperate need of investment. A more realistic approach to the organisation of school based support is also needed. PEAs could provide this if not overburdened by other tasks and supported by a modest flow of resources. Unless MIITEP is regenerated the pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools will continue to rise and quality is likely to diminish further.

Postscript

During 2001 it was decided to recruit three more cohorts for a modified version of MIITEP. JC and MSCE students are to be located in separate colleges, so that JC holders now have four-month residential blocks both at the start and the end of the programme. Examinations will be prepared by the colleges, with MANEB playing a smaller role.

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APPENDIX I -Samples

Colleges
Two colleges were selected: one was all-female, and denominational; the other was mixed-sex, and government-run. Student samples were drawn from both colleges.

Tutors
In each college, ten tutors were selected to give a balance across age, gender and subject. They were interviewed, and 16 of them were observed teaching, as follows:

English - 5

Maths   - 3
Physics – 3
Home Economics – 1
Foundation Studies – 4
Creative Arts – 1

Students
a) Surveys. Questionnaires were administered to 176 Cohort 6 students on entering the programme, to 240 Cohort 2 students on exiting the programme, and to 64 Cohort 1 NQTs.
b) Case studies: 27 students wrote autobiographies; they were observed and interviewed in their schools.
c) Focus group discussions were held with 30 students

Schools   13 schools were used, within four districts adjacent to the colleges, where the selected MIITEP trainees were teaching.   All the headteachers were interviewed, and each trainee was observed teaching twice.   Primary Education Advisors linked to these schools were interviewed.

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[1] The MUSTER (Multi-Site Teacher Education Research) Project is a research project funded by DFID. It is based on collaboration between educational research institutes in Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and the University of Sussex Institute of Education. There were four main strands to the research: the costs of teacher education, the college context, curriculum issues, and the process of becoming a teacher

[2] In 2001 the decision was taken to

[3] DECs have now been converted into Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS)

[4] DFID has provided 8.8 million pounds of grant aid for MSSSP over 5 years for its whole range of activities.

[5] Due to lack of time, a cross-sectional approach was taken using two cohorts that appeared reasonably similar. The maths tests comprised a mixture of MSCE and JC items; these may not be related to the primary school syllabus and therefore do not directly measure their ability to teach the subject.

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Executive summary: report on Nyanu Teachers'College

Background

Nyanu Teachers' College is the country's major primary and secondary teacher training institution, catering for 3,500 full and part-time students a year. Using traditional face-to-face on and off-campus methods, it is currently unable to cope with the demand for initial and in-service teacher training programmes. There are Ministry of Education expectations that it will expand its range of its courses to reflect planned-for curriculum changes. Mixed-mode provision appears to offer the solution to these challenges

In 2002, the Ministry of Education applied for international funding for a one-year consultancy into ways in which the College could use open and distance learning to support the Government's educational development aims, provide initial and in-service training for a far greater number of teachers in a wider range of subject areas, and achieve these in ways that were effective, efficient and cost beneficial.

Research and consultancy process

The first step in the research process was to conduct an environmental scan. Morrison (1991) characterises environmental scanning as gaining strategic intelligence on changing external needs, trends and patterns and assessing the impact of these on the organization's vision, mission, strengths and weaknesses and strategic directions. This aspect of the research is detailed in Section 1 of this report.

Then, as advocated by Norris and Poulton (1993), the research team developed a strategic and operational plan. The strategic planning focused on the stakeholders' views on the national teacher training needs, the opportunities and constraints in the current environment and how the institution should respond to these. The process and outcomes here are described in Section 2 of this report.

The operational planning involved consideration of the stakeholders' advice and the internal and external ramifications of adopting open and distance learning and in accordance with the approach advocated by Steeples (1988), adopting systemic, action- and goal-oriented responses to these. This work is detailed in Section 3.

Pilot projects

Pilot open and distance learning projects were undertaken to determine the resource, skills development and time-release needs and the commitment and capacities of the staff. The programmes developed combined theoretical studies and practical work in schools and these are described in detail in Section 4 of this report. The work carried out showed that open and distance education could be used in teacher training as shown in Robinson & Latchem (2002). However it also evidenced need for time-release and specialised training and support for course developers and course tutors, neither of which can be currently provided by the institution.

The planning and the pilot projects operated in accordance with the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000). Gender issues were also addressed at the strategic planning workshop.

General findings

The research team found strong evidence of need for the College to move into open and distance learning and strong support for such an approach from Government, schools, teachers and the wider community. They also found strong commitment to such a venture by the College senior management.

The research team decided that a mixed mode approach was needed. That is to say, that some of the techniques and technologies of distance education should be adapted to on-campus applications and that some face-to-face and practical work had to be planned for with the student teachers and experienced

teachers studying off-campus. The team also concluded that convenience, flexibility and choice was called for in regard to:

- ?? Entry and exit points.
- ?? Place of study (at home, in schools, in community telecentres, on campus, etc).
- ?? Pace of study (closely paced or unstructured).
- ?? Learning methodologies and technologies.
- ?? Support mechanisms (timetabled and on-demand tutorials and practical sessions, audio and online conferencing, etc.).

Costs

Section 5 details the costs and the cost benefits of mixed-mode provision. It shows that while there may be significant start-up costs, there will also be distinct cost and other benefits for the Government, College, schools, student and teachers:

- ?? The Government will be able to achieve higher enrollment targets at a lesser cost than through face-to-face provision. This will come about through economies of scale, uses of technology and additional students enrolled at marginal rather than full cost.
- ?? The College will be able to boost its student numbers and achieve savings in direct teaching costs (e.g., salaries), indirect teaching costs (e.g., buildings and other physical facilities) and learning time by using open and distance learning materials in both on- and off-campus applications.
- ?? Serving teachers will be able to access professional education and training at any time anywhere.
- ?? The trainee and in-service teachers will be able to save on travel and time away from work.
- ?? The schools will save on lost 'downtime' incurred in re-training and their teachers will be trained whenever needed.
- ?? Such an initiative can foster inter-institutional collaboration. It can also be a vehicle for curriculum renewal and reform and can support the Ministry of Education's goals of moving the focus from teaching to learning and from didactism to constructivism.

In the interests of equity, it is important to ensure that teachers on off-campus initial and in-service training programmes incur no higher costs than their on-campus counterparts.

Quality assurance

It is also important that every aspect of these new forms of provision should have, and be shown to have, quality. There are mutual obligations on the part of the College, the staff developing and delivering the courses and services and the students enrolling in the programmes. These are set out in Appendices X, XI and XII.

Ways Forward

The College will need to identify the priority needs in transforming itself from a single-mode to mixed-mode provider. It will need to market these new forms of programmes and create an image of the institution and open and flexible learning that will appeal to the teaching profession. Carefully targetted marketing campaigns will be needed that 'speak' directly to the serving and aspiring teachers in ways that motivate them. This require the classic 'marketing mix' or 4Ps, focusing on: product (the courses and services on offer); price (the costs and cost benefits); place (the convenience of studying anytime anywhere), and promotion (in schools, learning centres, via the mass media and the Web, etc.).

Open and distance learning may provide a 'second chance', but it must never be 'second best'. Quality assurance is of paramount importance. There therefore needs to be a system in place, not only for development and delivery, but for continuous review and assessment to ensure relevance, sustainability and response to change and growth in demand. The study shows the need for a new Centre for Open and Distance Learning, appropriately staffed and resourced and dedicated to this work. It also shows need for time release for course writers and staff development and technical support for staff engaged in developing and delivering programmes, tutorial and other student support services. There is also need for close collaboration between this Centre, Computer Services, the Library and other learning support services within and beyond the institution. Appropriate reward and recognition for all staff engaged in such work,

linking the aspirations, interests and objectives of the individuals with those of the institution, are also essential.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Nyanu Teachers' College should build upon its reputation as an innovator and provider of quality teacher training courses and services by developing and maintaining a distinct identity based upon openness, flexibility and mixed-mode delivery.

Recommendation 2 The College should immediately implement plans to become a mixed-mode provider of initial and in-service teacher training courses, seek Government funding from 2003-4 onward to meet the necessary staffing, accommodation, resource and recurrent costs, and identify other sources of funding and support within the education system and wider community.

Recommendation 3 If the Government provides the necessary additional funding for this initiative, the College should immediately apply to the international donor for a follow-up consultancy to guide the establishment of the Open and Distance Learning Centre and mainstreaming of this form of provision into the work of the institution.

Recommendation 4 The College should establish an Open and Distance Learning Advisory Committee, representative of the Ministry, schools, College Board, senior mangement, teaching departments, Computer Services and Library, reporting directly to the Principal and responsible for recommending strategies, policies and procedures in support of such development.

Recommendation 5 the College should establish a new Centre for Open and Distance Learning to:

- ?? Help teaching departments and staff achieve quality in course and materials development, learner support and service delivery using a variety of instructional methods and media, both on- and off-campus.
- ?? Enable teachers and would-be teachers to be informed about initial and in-service teacher training opportunities, learn in accordance with their particular needs, and have maximum opportunities to succeed in their studies.
- ?? Establish and maintain enrolment, credit recognition, recognition of prior informal learning and other registration services.
- ?? Arrange for off-campus tutoring, mentoring, practical work, examinations proctoring and summer schools.
- ?? Ensure efficient and speedy delivery of course material, assignments and tutors' assessments and feedback.
- ?? Train and support those teachers in schools who will be recruited to provide on- and off-campus tutorial support.
- ?? Evaluate programmes, services, completion and graduation rates, recognition of qualifications, and equivalency regardless of modality of delivery.
- ?? Cost open and flexible learning from the institutional and the students' standpoints.
- ?? Provide administrative support for enrolments, mailings, dates of assignments received and returned, grades, etc.
- ?? Provide word-processing and desktop publishing services.
- ?? Store and dispatch course material.
- ?? Liaise with Printing Services, Computing Services, the Library, Guidance and Counselling, Student Affairs and other College support services.
- ?? Liaise with government, non-government, private sector and community agencies with common interests in open and distance education within and beyond the school system.
- ?? Ensure quality in all operations, products and services.

Recommendation 6 The Centre for Open and Distance Learning should be established as an entity in its own right, but should operate in close collaboration with Computer Services.

Recommendation 7 The Centre should be run by a full-time Co-ordinator with overall responsibility for the policies and procedures in Recommendation 5. above and reporting to senior management (for the duties statement, see Appendix IX). This position should be publicly advertised. If the appointee is

Practitioner research and evaluation skills training in open and distance learning

external, s/he should have the necessary postgraduate qualifications and experience. If the appointee is internal, s/he should be enabled to pursue postgraduate study in this area, possibly through open and distance education while in post (see Appendix X).

Recommendation 8 The Centre should recruit two appropriately qualified and experienced full-time instructional designers with responsibility for curriculum and staff development, assisting staff in the development and evaluation of open and flexible programmes and methodological and technological innovation (for duties statements, see Appendix IX).

Recommendation 9 The Centre's initial staffing should also include full-time clerical staff dedicated to providing the quality and speedy word processing, desktop publishing and basic graphics design necessary for mastering the print open and flexible learning material and general office duties associated with 5. above (for the duties statements, see Appendix IX).

Recommendation 10 The Centre's accommodation should include a reception area for staff and students, separate offices for the Co-ordinator and the instructional designers, a training room, a work area for the general office staff, an area for materials and dispatch. Allowance should also be made for future expansion.

Recommendation 11 The Centre's offices and work areas should be equipped with the necessary computers, printers, copiers, Internet access, telephones and fax.

Recommendation 12 Senior management, the Advisory Committee and the Centre's Co-ordinator should develop the necessary policies and procedures regarding accreditation, equivalency, articulation, recognition of prior informal learning, enrolment, collaboration with other institutions/agencies, resources, quality assurance and the evaluation of programmes and services, copyright, intellectual property, plagiarism, copying, cheating, etc.

Recommendation 13 The College should provide reward and recognition for innovative and quality teaching and learning and should give this work the highest possible profile to this work to encourage institution-wide change and improvement.

Recommendation 14 A system of continuous review and evaluation should be established to ensure sustainability, relevance in open and flexible learning provision and capacity to respond to change and growth in demand.

Recommendation 15 The open and distance learning initiative should be proactive and marketed in ways that will attract and serve all members of the teaching profession.

Recommendation 16 The College should use appropriate mixes of 'low technology' and 'high technology', focusing first on developing its capacities to develop and deliver courses through print and correspondence (paper-based and email) and then moving into online learning after due regard to access, cost, quality and technical and human resource capacity.

Recommendation 17 The staffing and resources of the Computer Services, Library and other support services need to be expanded to be in accord with the needs and potential of open and distance learning.

Recommendation 18 Close links need to be established with local schools, libraries, community telecentres and other agencies to provide an country-wide infrastructure for delivering open and flexible teacher education.

Three Forms of Reporting

1. The first is an extract from a paper published in open and distance learning journal.

Telelearning

Telecentres enable all types of learning to be available in remote communities via the Internet and/or satellite or terrestrial broadcast. Their offerings range from basic literacy and numeracy programmes to higher education studies and from upgrading skills in farmers, fire fighters and factory workers to professional development for teachers, nurses, and doctors (see, for example, Short, 2001; Panda & Chaudhary, 2001; Akakpo & Fontaine, 2001).

Telework, telebanking, telecommerce and business support

Many rural and remote communities are dependent upon subsistence farming or declining traditional industries, and are struggling to survive and experiencing out-migration. Telework enables telecentre-trained community members to become voluntary or paid ICT trainers in the centres, or establish new enterprises, for example, community newspapers or online businesses offering wordprocessing, desktop publishing, abstracting, editing, indexing, bookkeeping, information broking, multimedia or Web design, and other services (Bertin & Denbigh, 2000).

The European Commission has supported a considerable number of telework projects and telework training schemes including the UK Teleworking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Scheme (http://www.itnto.org.uk), LocalNet (European) Telework Training Project (http://www.bealtaine.ie) and ADAPT-BIS (Building the Information Society) (http://www.europs.be/publica/wda-en.doc).

Some telecentres, like those in Western Australia (Short, 2001), maintain telebanking and telecommerce services where banks put profit and performance before people and service withdraw from the smaller communities. The Western Australian and Hungary telecentres also provide training and work opportunities for the unemployed under government job creation schemes (Short, op cit; Murray, 2001).

Telehealth, telemedicine, telelaw, telegovernance and other community services

Telecentres can provide vital telehealth and telemedicine services. The Remote Community Service Telecentres of Newfoundland and Labrador (www.rcst.net) facilitate asynchronous 'store and forward consultation' for medical emergencies, wherein remote medical staff capture patient data as text, audio, image, video, and transmit this to a physician at a major centre who reviews the data and then provides a diagnosis and treatment plan. The RCST network also provides teletraining for nurses who perform some physicians' duties when these are unavailable (Sheppard, 2000). The Nakaseke Telecentre in Uganda provides teleconsultation and telehealth services for two seriously under-resourced local hospitals that previously lacked the ICT to communicate with the districts they serve or the outside world (Mayanja, 2000).

The Western Australian and Queensland telecentres have trialled ICT-delivered rural legal services. In the incipient democracy of Paraguay, the AMIC@s telecentres which serve the poor neighbourhoods of Asunción, were conceived of, not only as community learning centres, but a means of strengthening democratic processes, improving communication between citizens and government and increasing community participation in civic activities by automating and simplifying procedures such as registering to vote and applying for licences (Aranda & Fontaine, 2000). The Gaseleka Telecentre in South Africa's Northern Province acts as a service agency for the Departments of Health and Welfare and Home Affairs, saving the local community from an arduous 160 km return journey to the nearest town and increasing the number and range of people using the centre (Benjamin, 2000).

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2. The second has been shortened and put in a form more suitable for reporting to busy government officers.

Executive Summary

The study has shown that telecentres can serve a wide range of community needs. Using the Internet and/or satellite or terrestrial broadcast, they can support:

A wide range of initial and continuing educational, training and professional development programmes.

Training and work opportunities for the unemployed under government job creation schemes.

New ICT-based enterprises, e.g., community newspapers and online businesses offering wordprocessing, desktop publishing, abstracting, editing, indexing, bookkeeping, information broking, multimedia or Web design, and other services.

Telebanking and telecommerce services where it is uneconomical for banks and other agencies to continue to serve the smaller communities.

Telehealth and telemedicine services for smaller local hospitals and teletraining for nurses who perform some doctors' duties when they are unavailable.

Rural legal services.

Improving communication between citizens and government and increasing community participation in civic activities.

Case studies of successful telecentres are given in the Appendix to this report.

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3. The third has been written for the local media.

Telecentres' helping hand

If a report currently before government is accepted, remote and rural communities may soon be able to access a wide range of educational, training, work and technical services through a network of 'telecentres'.

'Telecentres provide communities with access to computers and the Internet. We aim to develop a very extensive network and use this network of centres to serve the most needy', said a government source.

No longer will those in the more far-flung parts of the country have to drive to the major towns to attend classes, do their banking, have a health check, or establish a new business. They will be able to do all of these things where they live and in ways that suit them best.

This recent study finds that all around the word, telecentres are enabling people to learn about ICT, improve their knowledge and skills, and establish new enterprises. Doctors and nurses can call on the help and advice of their colleagues in major centres. The unemployed can access better training and work opportunities. Communities can be strengthened and links can be forged between communities and the government.

By establishing a national network of telecentres, the government will be placing our local farming communities right at the cutting edge of 21st century technology-based development.

Research, Scholarship and Publishing in Distance Education:
Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

This paper explores trends, issues and future directions in research, scholarship and publishing in the field of open, flexible and distance learning. It begins by surveying the changing nature of the field and its implications for research, scholarship, and publishing in the field. It explores issues, questions and areas of investigation in the field, and examines the influence of converging practices from related areas such as virtual/online, and other forms of technology enhanced teaching and learning. The paper takes a close look at opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses of research in distance education and e-learning. Ideas raised in this paper are intended to serve as a trigger for discussion on this subject. The expectation is that from this exchange of ideas we will be able to identify, explore, and define areas, issues, questions, and directions for the future that professionals in this field could be pursuing. We expect that this paper will attract the attention of novice researchers and scholars as well as experienced professionals in the field.

The changing nature of distance education

The practice of distance education (DE) has undergone significant changes over the past few decades. A few decades ago when our predecessors were blazing the trail in this field, what we know as "open and distance learning" passed by in the name of correspondence education, external or extramural studies. In those days also, these sorts of educational activities were generally confined to the periphery of mainstream conventional face-to-face teaching and learning. Things are quite different now. Open and distance learning (ODL), is being widely adopted as a valid and feasible alternative approach to teaching and learning across all sectors of our educational system.

Some of the forces that are influencing this rise in prominence of distance education over recent times include improving capabilities of information and communications technology, the changing conditions of the workplace; the changing composition of the student population and their improving learning capabilities. Although, these are also influencing conventional educational practices, they have had an even greater influence on open, flexible and distance learning because of its reliance on mediated forms for communication between the teachers and learners, and the flexibility of place and pace that it affords. Of all these factors, clearly advancements in information and communications technology have had the greatest impact on distance education practices. The printed text was clearly at the core of the correspondence mode of teaching and learning. The use of radio, telephone, and television came a little later. We have come a long way from those days of the Guttenberg technology. The possibilities now include use of the printed text, audio and video communications, computer mediated

communications, audio-graphic telecommunications, multimedia, the Internet and the World Wide Web (see for instance, Nipper, 1989).

Distance education has traditionally implied the physical separation of learners from their teachers for much of the duration of the study period. The basic tenets of print-based distance education systems have been textbooks, study guides, and local centers for private study and tutoring. For the most part, in such settings, communications between teachers and distance learners is non-contiguous. Increasingly more affordable, and accessible information and communications technology is changing this practice. These days, for better or for worse, the use of the Internet and the WWW is placing a much reduced emphasis on local center support services that have been a basic feature of distance education systems. This transformation has brought about a change in the essential nature of distance education activity, much like the change it itself brought about in emerging as a viable alternative to conventional face-to-face instruction. For some observers, this is a cause for much concern but for others, this means a strengthening of distance education activity.

Newer information and communications technologies (ICT) are leveraging many learning and teaching activities in ways that were not possible via the print medium. Some of these include demonstrations of critical learning activities such as simulations and laboratory experiments, and three-dimensional representations of objects and processes. The expanding capabilities of information and communications technology have enabled all sorts of learning opportunities. These developments have significantly influenced the way subject matter content is delivered to distance learners, and the ways in which they are able to access and use study materials. The print technology is a static medium. What is produced remains in the same state until it is revised. The WWW on the other hand, enables the housing of "live" documents, which can be revised easily and cheaply. These developments are influencing the nature of the teaching and learning transaction.

Information and communications technologies have also led to improvements in the capability of educational institutions both in terms of resources that they are able to use for distance education as well as empowering their teaching staff. These improvements in the capability of educators and educational institutions have been of particular interest to the changing workplace environment. A technology rich working environment is creating the need for continuing professional education and training. Educational institutions are under pressure to deliver education and training in innovative and flexible ways and "just in time". Along with these changes in the workplace, many educational institutions are facing an unconventional student population, one that is adult, in full-time employment and with part-time study on their agenda, and also quite literate but unfamiliar with the newer information and communications technologies such as the Internet and the WWW. Overall, they are quite different from the student group of conventional face-to-face instruction. Moreover, they are demanding a greater degree of choice, flexibility and say in what they are being asked to do as part of their studies. Many want to study for very specific purposes and are keen to utilize the time and money that have for maximum benefit, and they are willing to pay for these services.

The influence of converging practices

It is often claimed that a unique feature of distance education, and one that sets it apart from conventional educational practices is the separation in it of the acts of teaching from learning (see Keegan, 1990). For those making this claim, 'teaching' in distance education refers to the preparation of study materials and other resources either in print or non-print form. 'Learning' in DE on the other hand refers to student's interaction with these study materials. This seems like a fallacious argument because preparation of study materials and resources alone cannot constitute 'teaching' if it is agreed that the act of 'teaching' implies the occurrence of learning. Given this line of thinking, one cannot claim to have 'taught' if no 'learning' has occurred. Following from this argument then, it seems logical to conclude that 'teaching' in distance education does not actually begin till the materials are in the hands of learners and some form of facilitation of learning is taking place. This facilitation of the learning process in DE is different from the facilitation of learning in face-to-face educational settings. In conventional educational settings, this facilitation takes place among other ways, in face-to-face small group tutorials and in student and teacher consultations. In DE systems, much of this has been made possible with local tutorial help and face-to-face teaching at residential schools. The availability of information and communications technologies is changing this situation. It is now possible to support and facilitate learning at a distance in an ongoing and asynchronous format a lot more easily and in more innovative ways. At times, these practices make it difficult to separate what is claimed as distance education activity from other modes of flexible teaching and learning arrangements. All of this has led to a considerable blurring of boundaries between DE and other forms of teaching and learning activities.

The principles of open and flexible learning, which were once synonymous with distance education practices, are becoming increasingly commonplace in all forms of educational practice. Open, flexible and distance learning are no longer confined to the 'periphery'. For many educational institutions, it is the 'mainstream', and the most cost-effective and viable approach to education and training. Distance education practices have also benefited from developments in information and communications technologies. With improvements in the delivery technologies, the quality of teaching and learning in the distance education mode has also improved. Distance education activity has also changed because of the changing needs and circumstances of preservice and professional education. Distance education is no longer the preserve of the proverbial 'lonely long distance learner'. Its openness, flexibility of pace, and place of learning are very much in demand right here, in the densest centers of human habitation. As such, distance education has an increased appeal, and is now of interest to us all, albeit from different perspectives and for different purposes.

It has become clear, especially after much 'theorizing about distance education and open learning' in its early days, that while the practice of teaching and learning at a distance is different from other forms of educational activities, the pedagogical foundations of distance education are not significantly different. What we already know, and are researching about human cognition, learning, and teaching is very relevant and applicable to distance education. All of this has meant that various forms of teaching and learning (i.e., conventional practices, distance education and open learning, and all forms of technology-enhanced teaching and learning) have come to realize that there is more in common among them than the differences they each display. This has led to a great deal of converging practices among various modes of teaching and learning. This has naturally led to a blurring of their traditional boundaries.

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Distance education, which was once likened to correspondence education, has become a lot more inclusive. This has invariably led to a broadening of the scope of the field to include a much wider focus on a range of developments, which were previously seen to be outside its domain or beyond its boundaries. One of these developments is the exponential growth of on-line or e-learning practices. Many speak of e-learning and distance learning in the same vein.

Weaknesses of research in distance education

Not very long ago, there were just a handful of peer-reviewed and other professional publications covering research and scholarly activities in distance education. Today there are several focused specifically on this field and many others that cover distance education as well, apart from their own core areas. These are too many to list here, and in any case, the point is not the growing numbers of such outlets but their previous core focus and patronage. Some of the areas that have the potential for greatest impact on distance education practices are e-learning, and other technology-enhanced educational environments. This means that there are a greater number of competing outlets for the publication of research in distance education. That is certainly a good thing for DE scholars, as it gives them and their work much broader exposure than was possible before. Moreover, an increasing number of professional publications with converging goals has also meant that work being carried out in the field of distance education is seen as having potential benefit to other areas of learning and teaching, including conventional face-to-face educational practices.

An overview of the DE literature from the past few decades shows a great deal of attention being focused on 'descriptive' type research, which was work that aimed to describe the DE phenomenon. This focus led to some interesting and groundbreaking work on defining the changing nature of distance education activity and theorizing about learning and teaching at a distance (see Keegan, 1990). With more experience, both in the practice of DE and its study, there has been growing interest on assessing the quality of learning and teaching at a distance, and on the influences of various forms of technology in this regard. This research has drawn from what we already know about human cognition, learning, and teaching, and about the effects of educational technology including how to go about ascertaining their effects validly and reliably. One of the most noteworthy contributions to educational practice of engagement in distance education activity has been the awareness and interest in learning and instructional design processes and course design and development in general. Mostly because of the need to pay greater attention to distance learners, educators have come to realize that "shoveling" lecture notes and class schedules (known as "shovel ware"), into printed Study Guides and on-line learning environments is not going to be enough. A lot more is necessary to engage learners and support them in their learning.

Despite these positive developments in the direction that DE research is currently taking, it would not be erroneous to suggest that research and scholarship in this broadened field of DE is still very weak from several perspectives. Part of this lies in the multidisciplinary nature of the field, which restricts the emergence of one or more clearly defined and widely accepted research methodologies. Researchers in this field tend to adopt research methods from areas such as education, humanities or the social sciences, and sometimes applied less rigorously than in those disciplines. Several studies prepared by The United States Institute for Higher Education Policy in Washington, DC for The American Federation of Teachers and the

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National Education Association observed some serious limitations with existing research practices in DE (see for instance, Phipps & Merisotis, April, 1999, http://www.ihep.com/Pubs/PDF/Difference.pdf. For other related reports see also http://www.ihep.com/Publications.php?parm=Pubs/PubLookup.php)

The report by Phipps and Merisotis (1999) is based upon material that was published during the 1990s. It places particular attention on those types of technologies that are currently being used by the majority of institutions. This report concentrates primarily on an evaluation of all original work — including experimental, descriptive, correlation, and case study research. It also summarizes key information and findings of other policy papers, articles, and essays that dominated the literature. The authors of this report concede that while this review of original research does not encompass every study published since 1990, it does capture the most important and salient of these works. From this limited group of original research they found that the three broad measures of the effectiveness of distance education usually examined are: *student outcomes such as grades and test scores*; *student attitudes towards learning through distance education*; and *student satisfaction toward distance learning*.

Phipps and Merisotis claim that most of the studies they examined conclude that, regardless of the technology used, distance learning courses enjoyed high student satisfaction rates, and compared favorably with classroom-based courses. For example, many experimental studies they studied indicate that students participating in distance learning courses performed as well as their counterparts in a traditional classroom setting. These studies found that their distance learning students had similar grades or test scores, or had the same sorts of attitudes toward their course. The descriptive analyses and case studies focus on student and faculty attitudes and perceptions of distance learning. The purposes of many of these types of research were to develop recommendations to improve distance learning. These studies typically concluded that students and faculty had a positive view toward distance learning.

The Phipps and Merisotis report claims that a closer look at this research, however, reveals that it may not be prudent to accept these findings at face value because of problems with the methods that were used to reach these findings. It claims that the most significant problem had to do with the overall quality of the research, which pretty much rendered many of the findings inconclusive. Phipps and Merisotis claimed that the findings of the original research must be read with some caution. Assessing the quality of good research requires determining if the studies adhered to commonly accepted principles of good research practice. They argue that this is essential if the results of the studies are to be considered valid and generalizable. If a study does not abide by these proven principles and practices, the results they derive can be erroneous and misleading. The Phipps and Merisotis report flags the following issues as the shortcomings of the surveyed literature.

?? Many of the experimental studies did not use randomly selected subjects.

?? Much of the research experimental research reviewed did not control for extraneous variables and therefore could not show cause and effect.

?? The validity and reliability of the instruments used to measure student outcomes and attitudes were questionable.

?? Many of the studies did not adequately control for the feelings and attitudes of the students and faculty.

These are critical concerns and they need serious consideration by researchers in the filed, as these issues seem to be still prevalent in much of contemporary DE research.

Research directionsOpportunities and challenges

In the remainder of this paper, we will use the research categories used by the Phipps and Merisotis report to explore opportunities and challenges for research in distance education.

Descriptive reports

Descriptive research comprises the collection and reporting of data on organizations, programs, and/or processes. In distance education settings, descriptive studies have typically been concerned with reporting on organizational initiatives, programs, processes, challenges, successes, and their failures. These reports tell a story about what was done, where, why and how. Much of this data is derived from institutional records or collected to answer particular questions of donor agencies and other such stakeholders. Some of this data is also collected with surveys and other structured or semi-structured observation tools.

Good descriptive research comprises valid and reliable data, which reveal interesting trends, and chart new directions. The bad ones, and there are plenty of these, are boring, and they tell you nothing new, except report that this is what we did here, why and our way. Such research is particularly useless, especially after you have read a few times how, for instance, how radio has been used to educate a group of people somewhere, or how Science was being taught in the distance education mode-- no offence is intended.

To be of any interest to peer-reviewed journals, descriptive research must meet certain criteria. These would include rigor in the reporting of programs and processes, and use of reliable instruments for gathering pertinent data. A very important component of descriptive research is the validation of its measurement tools in order to determine if they measure what they were supposed to measure. Good descriptive research must seek to report innovative efforts -- efforts that contribute to what is known about certain phenomenon. No one wants to read and publish another story about how broadcast television has been used to teach at some regional institution or how they have been developing and distributing their study materials, if there is nothing inherently creative or ambitious about the process.

Case study reports

Case study research is an in-depth examination of one organization, one project, or one subject. For a case study, the researcher may use a variety of methods to gather data on the phenomenon that is being studied. The explanation of the phenomenon is generally presented in narrative form, although it may comprise data in a range of formats including audio and video materials. In distance education settings, a case study may take the form of a report on how a program is being offered to a particular group of students, how a subject is offered using particular technologies. The problem with much of this type of research is that the bulk of the reports do not go beyond much more than a "dry" and boring description of the delivery

technology. They lack any significant focus on any innovative learning design within that context, or a critical analysis of the experiences of stakeholders.

The requirements for good case study research are not too different from the requirements for good descriptive research. A good case study reports on a single unit or case. As such, it has a character, totality, and a clear boundary. The report reflects some kind of unity in the system, project, or process that it is reporting. Moreover, there is a unique way of organizing data in the report, which preserves the unitary character of the object or process that is being studied. A case study researcher is seeking patterns, regularity, and commonality in the study. The responsibility for interpretation of case study reports is shared between the researcher and its reader. Observing the same phenomenon from the same point of view by several researchers can validate case studies.

Correlation studies

Correlation research involves collecting data in order to determine whether, and to what extent a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. In this form of research, an estimate is provided of just how related two variables are. For instance, if two variables are highly related, a correlation coefficient near +1.00 (or –1.00) will be obtained; and if two variables are not related, a coefficient near .00 will be obtained. One example of a correlation study might be determining the relationship between student satisfaction with an instructor or the type of technology used. It is important to note that correlation research never establishes "cause and effect", it only reveals relationships. Correlational studies fall into this trap quite often.

Experimental studies

Experimental research is the only type of research that can truly test hypotheses concerning "cause and effect" relationships. In an experimental study, the researcher manipulates at least one *independent variable* and observes its effects on one or more *dependent variables*. In other words, the researcher determines what is being investigated; who gets what, and which group of "subjects" will get which treatment (i.e., the *independent variable*). The groups of subjects in the study are generally referred to as experimental and control groups. Ideally, in experimental research the groups of subjects to be studied are randomly selected before the experiment to eliminate any bias due to sampling. This procedure is not followed in other methods of research.

The essence of experimentation is the concepts of "prediction" and "control". A researcher strives to ensure that the experiences of all the groups of subjects in the study are as equal as possible on all the important variables except the *independent variable*. Such experimental research is very hard to carry out properly in distance education contexts due to the difficulty of controlling for confounding variables in such "open" settings. This is a very good reason to stay away from carrying out experimental research unless of course you are able to keep your treatment groups intact.

Practitioner research and evaluation skills training in open and distance learning

Evaluation studies

Evaluation studies comprise the systematic acquisition of feedback on the use, worth and impact of some object, program or process in relation to its intended outcomes. The major goal of evaluation studies is to influence decision-making of some sort through the provision of feedback. The most basic distinctions between the various types of evaluation are often drawn between *formative, summative,* and *monitoring* or *integrative evaluation*. Evaluation studies are different from research studies in several ways. At the very basic level, research studies are usually undertaken to satisfy the curiosity of an investigator. Evaluation studies on the other hand, seek to study the impacts and outcomes of processes that were designed to contribute to the solution of a practical problem. Both sorts of studies require nevertheless, the same level of rigor. The general tendency in the field has been to collect data from very crudely developed instruments such as surveys and questionnaires without much thought to what is being evaluated, how and how systematically.

Getting your research published: Some guidelines

Insisting on methodological rigor in the conduct of your research is extremely important. You will be well on your way to getting your work accepted by your peers if you employed sound methodology in the conduct of your research. The rest of the process is much easier. Let us first deal with what most peer-reviewed journals are looking out for.

Critical attributes of publishable material

Most journals would be examining your submissions according to the following criteria. Be sure to ask yourself the same questions. Does your article do the following?

?? Contributes to the field. How would you rate the contribution of your paper to the field?

?? Quality of ideas, goals, and intentions. How would you rate the clarity of the ideas, goals and intentions of the paper?

?? Importance of topic to its readers. How would you rate the importance of the topic of the paper to the readers and to distance educators generally?

?? Relevance of ideas to the readers. How would you rate the quality and relevance of ideas in the paper to the readership?

?? Methodological rigor in the paper. How coherent is the methodology and presentation of ideas in the paper including review of the relevant literature, data analysis, presentation and interpretation of the findings, and their discussion?

?? Coherence in the paper including language and writing style. How would you rate the use of language and overall expression/writing style in the paper?

?? Technical merit of the paper (construction and adherence to publication guidelines). How would you rate the technical merit of the paper including its adherence to the Journal's publication style?

Length of articles

Articles should not exceed 7,000 words and must include a clear and concise abstract of 100 to 150 words. Longer articles may be acceptable for publication consideration after agreement is reached with the Editors. All submissions including abstract, figures, tables, and references must be double-spaced, and typed on one side only with at least one-inch margin on all sides. Contributions might be able to be submitted in electronic form, although a paper copy is often

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preferred. To facilitate blind review, all indication of authorship must appear on a detachable cover page only. It is unwise and unethical to send your paper out for consideration to more than ONE journal at a time.

Adherence to preferred publication style

The importance of preparing submissions for review according to prescribed publications style of a journal cannot be over stressed. Submissions for review must be prepared according to the prescribed publication style. Most journals use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* which is published by the American Psychological Association. Most journals will not consider submissions that are not prepared using their preferred style. The presentation of citations, references, equations, and all other similar information should strictly conform to the preferred Style of the journal. Authors are responsible for checking the accuracy of these and ensuring that all in-text references appear in the *Reference List* at the end of the contribution. A *Reference List* is not the same thing as *Bibliography.* A reference list is a list of sources, which you will have used in your article. A bibliography on the other hand, is a list of sources on the subject of your paper, not just the ones that you have cited in the preparation of your paper.

Preparing figures and tables

Figures must be submitted in camera-ready format suitable for reproduction. If this is not possible, figures will be redrawn by the publishers, in which case there is a chance that they may not come out the way you wanted them. Type figure legends double-spaced on a separate sheet of paper. Indicate the title of the article and the number of the figure lightly in pencil on the back of each. The captions to illustrations should be placed together and also typed on a separate sheet. All figures and tables should be numbered separately using Arabic numerals, and placed together at the end of the manuscript. Clearly visible notes within the text (such as "*Place Table 1 About Here*") should be used to indicate their approximate placement in the article.

Review by editorial board

All papers are reviewed by members of an Editorial Board with expertise in the areas(s) represented by a paper, and/or invited reviewers with special competence in the area(s) covered. In most cases, the editors reserve the right to make minor alterations to all papers that are accepted for publication.

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Concluding remark

This paper set out to explore trends, issues, and future directions in research, scholarship and publishing in the field of distance education. Its purpose is to trigger meaningful debate and discussion on the subject with the expectation that from such discourse would emerge, an improved awareness of the issues that confront researchers in this vibrant multidisciplinary field. As such, this paper is somewhat conversational and purposefully open ended with many of the issues it raises. This is to allow readers and participants in a discussion of its contents, to bring to it their own commentary and draw their own conclusions.

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