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**Evaluation Report  
of the Course for Distance Education Policy-Makers  
in Southern Africa**

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**FINAL REPORT**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) contracted the writer of this report to evaluate the online course for policy-makers working in open and distance learning (ODL) institutions in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Specifically, the contract required the writer to determine whether the online course met course participants' needs (i.e., increasing their understanding and knowledge of policy development processes) and whether the delivery strategies were efficient and effective. The writer was required to focus on the worthiness of the two aspects of course delivery: that is, online delivery using the Internet (e-mail facility and the CD-ROM) and the one-week face-to-face workshop in Maputo, Mozambique.

The evaluation of the online course covered the management process leading to the development of the course, the use of the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) Web site, online discussions, course materials, the user-friendliness of the online system, the worthiness of the different types of support systems and the participants' views of the online course. In addition, the evaluation of the face-to-face component covered the quality of the workshop structure, process and materials used; the integration of the workshop with the online course; the value of the workshop for the participants; and the appropriateness of the facilitators.

Subsequently, the evaluation covered the pre-workshop period, the one-week workshop period in Maputo and the post-workshop period. The methods of evaluating the online course included, among others, questionnaires, interviews and analysis of documents, e-mail messages and learning activities. The evaluator had access to the participants' and course facilitators' e-mails, so he was able to monitor the contribution of participants and course facilitators, the quality of the discussions and the pace at which participants progressed in the course. Questionnaires were administered online through e-mails and at the face-to-face workshop in Maputo. The formal and informal interviews were conducted at the workshop in Maputo, as well as by telephone when the need arose.

The online course was well conceived and managed. The layout was simple and easy to follow. The hyperlinks were clear, very directive, simplified and easy for participants to follow. The learning activities were challenging, stimulating and relevant to the social context and work environment of participants in the SADC region. At the same time, the activities depicted real-life situations and attempted to tap, enhance and build on participants' work experience.

Most participants were anxious about the online course prior to its commencement. However, after three weeks of participation the level of anxiety had declined for most of them because they had gained confidence in using the CD-ROM and computers. Most

participants' level of knowledge and skills regarding word processing, preparing and sending e-mail messages, browsing for information on the Internet and viewing the CD-ROM ranged from average to slightly above average. Indeed, most participants' computers had Internet connectivity and CD-ROM drives. However, participants who accessed the online course through the Internet complained of their computers' slowness in accessing the SAIDE Web site. Also, participants generally had difficulty opening portable document format (PDF) files and/or sending file attachments through e-mail.

Most participants found the instructions on the CD-ROM about the purpose, content, structure, expected outcomes and mode of delivery of the online course very helpful. The comments they received from colleagues and/or course facilitators were also helpful, encouraging, supportive, constructive and confidence-building. The online system was very user-friendly. However, online discussions were not fully used as expected, despite facilitators' efforts and encouragements. Pertinent issues raised in discussions were often not followed through to their logical conclusion.

Concerning the face-to-face workshop, most participants felt that facilitators clearly stated the workshop objectives. The quality of the content and the extent to which facilitators presented it was quite good. The workshop's physical conditions and logistical arrangements were also good. The workshop activities met participants' expectations. The time allocated to the various workshop activities was adequate, although some participants felt that the workshop session on budgeting for an ODL programme was inadequately covered and recommended that more time should be spent on it. The quality of the handouts and audiovisuals was good. The pace of the facilitators' presentations was satisfactory in the sense that it was neither too fast nor too slow. The workshop activities were reasonable: they were neither very demanding nor very light. The time provided by facilitators for active participation, practical activities and group discussions was sufficient. Also, the duration of the Maputo workshop was sufficient.

The aspects of the workshop perceived by participants to be most valuable included: learning about the process of developing a vision and policy framework, learning to recognise characteristics of a good vision, learning to develop guidelines for formulating a good policy, learning about financial planning, group activities, critical reflections, the inputs of resource persons, the exercises on policy formulation and development, the video linking vision to policy development, and the exercise on designing and evaluating a policy framework for an actual ODL programme.

Overall, participants were satisfied with the online course and it met their expectations. The course content, handouts, supplementary readings, assigned activities and course delivery format (i.e., online and face-to-face workshop) were critical features to the success of the course. The aspects of the online course participants felt contributed most to their learning were the way the course was designed, the challenging nature of the course, the introductory activities, the face-to-face workshop in Maputo, support provided by facilitators and the quality of reading materials on the CD-ROM. On the other hand, the aspects of the



online course that participants felt contributed least to their learning were the failure to send e-mails, which kept bouncing back to the sender, and the lack of online interaction among participants.

Based on participants' and course facilitators' views and feelings as well as the evaluator's observations, it was recommended that the two modes of course delivery (online and face-to-face) be retained. The topic on financial management should be given more time and attention because it did not receive adequate time and attention at the Maputo workshop. People enrolling in this course in future should be computer literate and have access to the Internet and computer facilities. However, should some participants have no access to computers and Internet/e-mail facilities, they will need to be provided with printed materials. Participants who fail to complete pre-workshop activities should not be allowed to attend the face-to-face workshop.

Course facilitators should regularly check to ensure the participants' progress is in accordance with the objectives of the online course. The course should be offered between June and August rather than towards the end of the year when everyone seems to be very busy trying to meet deadlines at the workplace. The use of assigned learning activities as well as templates for writing responses should be retained. Course facilitators and participants should ensure that issues raised in participants' submissions are responded to rather than ignored. The SADC-TCDE should consider commissioning a survey study within the SADC region to establish the level of computer literacy, Internet connectivity and access to computers with Internet connectivity and CD-ROM drives.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the course participants and course facilitators who took their time to complete the questionnaires that were given to them as well as to endure the formal and informal interviews that I conducted with them. In addition, I wish to thank those course participants who readily provided further information when requested to do so through the e-mail. Without their co-operation it would not have been possible to prepare this report. I wish to single out, in particular, Mr. Vis Naidoo, the course director, who provided me with valuable literature and critical comments on several drafts of this report. Finally, I would like to thank Rose Magagula, my wife, who proofread and provided useful critical comments.

C.M. Magagula

## **1.0. Chapter One: Terms of Reference**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) contracted the writer of this report to evaluate the online course for policy-makers working in open and distance learning (ODL) institutions in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Specifically, the writer was contracted to determine whether the online course met course participants' needs (i.e., increasing their understanding and knowledge of policy development processes) and whether the delivery strategies were efficient and effective. The writer was requested to focus on the worthiness of the two aspects of course delivery: that is, online delivery using the Internet (e-mail facility and the CD-ROM) and the one-week face-to-face workshop in Maputo, Mozambique.

The online course evaluation was expected to cover:

- The management process leading to the development of the course
- The use of the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) Web site and online discussions
- The online course materials
- The user-friendliness of the online system
- The worthiness of the different types of support systems
- The participants' views of the online course

The face-to-face workshop evaluation was expected to cover:

- The quality of the workshop structure, process and materials used
- The integration of the workshop with the online course
- The value of the workshop for the participants
- The appropriateness of the facilitators

## **2.0. Chapter Two: Background**

### **2.1. Introduction**

After recognising the importance of human-centred development and capacity-building initiatives in the socio-economic and development goals of the region, the member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed a Protocol on Education and Training on September 8, 1997, in Blantyre, Malawi (SADC, 1997). The objectives of the Protocol were, among others:

- (i) To establish mechanisms and institutional arrangements to enable member states to pool their resources to effectively and efficiently produce the required professional people with technical, research and managerial knowledge and skills to plan and manage the development process in the region
- (ii) To promote, co-ordinate, formulate and implement comparable and appropriate policies, strategies and systems of education and training in member states
- (iii) To develop and implement policies and strategies that promote the participation and contribution of the private sector, non-governmental organisations and other key stakeholders in the provision of education and training

In order to implement the provisions of the Protocol, the SADC member states recommended the establishment of technical committees (TCs) in the various levels of education and training. The technical committees were in Basic Education; Intermediate Education and Training; Higher Education, Training, Research and Development; Lifelong Education and Training; Certification and Accreditation, Training Fund; and Distance Education. The composition of the Technical Committee on Distance Education (TCDE) included representatives from the SADC region. The representatives were mainly from open learning and distance education institutions.

The primary function of the TCDE was to implement the objectives of the Protocol on Education and Training in the area of open learning and distance education. The specific objectives of the TCDE were:

- (i) To improve access to education and training
- (ii) To reduce the cost of education and training by maximising economies of scale
- (iii) To formulate national policies on distance education
- (iv) To establish distance learning institutions
- (v) To promote co-operation in the development of open learning and distance learning materials
- (vi) To support the development of a regional professional association in distance education

The TCDE recognised that its members lacked in-depth knowledge, requisite skills, expertise and competencies in formulating, designing, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the various aspects of open learning and distance education such as policy development, course design, material development and management of open learning and distance education institutions in the SADC region.

At its second annual regional meeting in Pretoria, South Africa, the TCDE developed a three-year development plan (July 2001 to June 2004) and outlined the priority areas that needed immediate attention. One of the priority areas was building capacity in open learning and distance education, especially in the policy development process.

Subsequently, TCDE developed a project proposal for training its members on policy development process in open learning and distance education. The TCDE submitted the project proposal to The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) for funding. COL agreed to fund it and contracted the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) to design and

develop an online course for policy-makers working in open learning and distance education institutions in the SADC region.

## **2.2. Objectives of the online course**

The objectives of the online training course were to provide participants with the following:

- (i) A conceptual platform and in-depth introduction to open learning and distance education concepts
- (ii) An understanding of the policy development process
- (iii) An understanding of the implications of different policy choices in open learning and distance education

In a nutshell, the objective of the online course was to upgrade the knowledge, skills and expertise of policy-makers working in institutions of open learning and distance education in the SADC region so that they would be able to execute their responsibilities efficiently, effectively and competently.

## **2.3. Course participants**

Participants in the online course were from Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Governments and ministries of education selected them on the basis of their association with open learning and distance education. Most participants were senior officers and educators working in institutions and organisations of open learning and distance education. There were 18 course participants, excluding the four facilitators. They all registered online.

## **2.4. Online course**

The online course was available on CD-ROM and at the SAIDE Web site. Each participant received a CD-ROM before the course started. In addition, they could access the course on

the SAIDE Web site through the Internet. Participants were advised to have access to computers that had Internet connectivity or CD-ROM drives or both, and to open e-mail addresses if they did not have them already. The course designers assumed that course participants would have e-mail addresses and access to computers with Internet connectivity or CD-ROM drives or both at the launch of the online course.

## **2.5. Distance education**

The online course was offered partly at a distance using computers, the Internet, the CD-ROM, e-mails and telephones, and partly on a face-to-face basis using the workshop strategy. Barker (n.d.) refers to these forms of course delivery in distance education as technology-assisted distance learning. Some of the terms used to describe these forms of distance learning technologies are distributed learning, virtual or Web-based education and training, and synchronous and asynchronous learning. In most technology-assisted learning, the learner is in one location and the provider of the learning is in another. Linking the learner and the provider is the technology. In this connection, the online course for policy-makers of distance education in the SADC region used computers, the Internet, the CD-ROM, e-mail and telephone technology to link the learners and the providers.

## **2.6. Course design and development principles**

As indicated above, COL contracted SAIDE to design, develop and offer the online course. In designing, developing and offering the course, SAIDE drew from the expertise available in the SADC region. The course designers used three educational principles to design the online course.

The first principle was that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers for the activities undertaken during the course. Therefore, course designers advised participants not to worry about “getting it wrong or right.” Each learning activity had questions requiring participants to develop and share their ideas about policy-making and distance education.

The course designers' expectations were that participants would share these ideas among themselves, thereby enriching their learning process.

The second principle was that the online course would depend for its success on all participants using e-mail to communicate and share ideas, to discuss issues and to agree or disagree with each other. Therefore, course designers advised participants to use e-mail as regularly as possible to share ideas.

The third principle was that the activities participants had to undertake and the supplementary readings were all available on the CD-ROM. Although the readings were many, participants were told that they did not necessarily need to read all of them during the online course. They were advised to read the core readings. The supplementary readings would be their resource.

## **2.7. The course structure**

As alluded to in the preceding section, the course provision was online, using the Internet, the CD-ROM and e-mail. At the beginning of the course, each participant was mailed a CD-ROM. The CD-ROM had special help files that assisted participants as they familiarised themselves with the use of the Internet and e-mails. The CD-ROM had simple instructions on how to prepare and send e-mails and attachments. Indeed, the first activity for participants was preparing and sending an e-mail to the group.

The online course had three phases. Phase 1 was online. It ran for approximately two months and comprised 30 notional hours of learning. Phase 2 was a one-week face-to-face workshop in Maputo, Mozambique. Phase 3 was again online for approximately two months. The fundamental assumption of this course was that there would be ongoing engagement among and feedback from participants and facilitators through e-mails and telephones where necessary. As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, during the online

phases participants accessed the course environment through the CD-ROM or Internet or both. The course environment comprised learning activities and support resources (supplementary readings), most of which were on the CD-ROM and/or linked to other Web resource sites.

The second phase of the online course was a one-week face-to-face intensive interaction of participants and facilitators in Maputo, Mozambique. This phase provided participants with an opportunity to work through practical learning activities together, share experiences and problems, and shape their learning environment to meet their specific requirements. The one-week workshop in Maputo comprised 40 notional hours of learning.

The third phase of the course was supposed to last for two months, but due to unforeseen circumstances it extended for one more month. Course designers expected that participants would continue interacting online through e-mails. They anticipated that the formal structure of the online environment would allow more dynamic engagement and interaction among the participants. There would be more discussions through the e-mails on the issues raised in the learning activities. The third phase of the course comprised a further 50 notional hours of learning. In total, the whole course was 120 notional hours of learning.

## **2.8. Expected outcomes**

The anticipated outcome of the online course was that participants would have a better understanding of the policy development process in open learning and distance education situations. Additional anticipated outcomes were that participants would develop a vision for learning in a given educational context; they would construct practical and realistic educational opportunities that met the requirements/needs in educational contexts; they would define management and resource needs for implementing open learning and distance education policies; and they would analyse changing roles of policy implementers and evaluators.



## **3.0. Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework**

### **3.1. Definition of evaluation**

Broadly defined, evaluation is a process of making judgements about the merit, value or worth of educational programmes (Borg & Gall, 1989). It is about checking on the value or worthiness or merit of a programme, project or other initiative. An evaluation of a programme, project or initiative is periodically undertaken to assess its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The process of project or programme evaluation often involves collecting, analysing and interpreting data in order to decide whether the goals and objectives of the project or programme have been achieved. In some social contexts, evaluation is undertaken to make a decision regarding policy direction, political strategies or the management of programmes or projects.

### **3.2. Purpose of evaluation**

Against this backdrop, the purposes of evaluation are varied (Nevo, 1986). When an evaluation is undertaken to improve or take a decision about an educational programme in progress and/or to decide whether such a programme should be continued or discontinued it is referred to as *formative evaluation*. Second, *summative evaluation* is undertaken at the end of a programme for purposes of selection, certification and accountability. Third, *socio-political* or *psychological evaluation* is conducted to motivate clients or supporters of a programme or to gain public support. Lastly, *administrative evaluation* is conducted to exercise administrative authority on certain issues.

### **3.3. Importance of evaluation research**

Evaluation research is an important tool for policy analysis, programme management and political action (Borg & Gall, 1989). Concerning policy analysis, evaluation research yields

important data about the costs, benefits and problems that may be associated with educational programmes. Policy analysts often use the data from evaluative studies to prepare position papers for decision-makers. Politicians use evaluation findings to advance their political agenda. In education, evaluation research is used as a tool for programme management and programme cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Programme evaluation is sometimes conducted to hold managers accountable for producing or failing to produce expected results. In short, programme evaluation data help programme managers make sound decisions about the programme design, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, personnel and budget.

### **3.4. Forms of evaluation**

The literature indicates two major categories of evaluation (Scriven, 1967): formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is conducted while the educational programme is in progress. The purpose of formative evaluation is to decide whether a programme or project needs modification or termination to save resources. Formative evaluation is an ongoing process. It takes into consideration all the stages of the programme or course. The results of the evaluation are expected to improve the provision and management of the programme. Formative evaluation facilitates the adaptation of the course content to programme objectives and identifies major gaps in the course delivery plan or the need for minor adjustments (University of Illinois, 2000).

On the other hand, summative evaluation normally is undertaken at the end of a programme. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to determine the worthiness of a programme. Summative evaluation assesses overall effectiveness of a completed course, and its findings are used as a springboard to develop a revised plan of the course or as baseline information for designing a new course or programme. Since summative evaluation is conducted at the end of a programme, it does not normally benefit or help learners who have just completed the course or programme (University of Illinois, 2000).

In evaluating the online course for policy-makers in distance education in the SADC region, the evaluator used both forms of evaluation.

### **3.5. Types of evaluation research**

Evaluation research can be quantitative, qualitative or both. In evaluating the online course for policy-makers in distance education in the SADC region, the evaluator used both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Quantitative evaluation research focuses on the objectives of the programme and takes, as given, the observed effects of the programme. A quantitative research approach is characterised by questions that can be statistically tabulated and analysed. It uses scales, checklists or yes/no responses and often limits respondents' answers to the categories made available to them. Quantitative research normally requires a large student sample for relevant statistical analyses. It is most useful for gathering information on large numbers of respondents for whom more in-depth, personalised approaches are not feasible (University of Illinois, 2000). It relies mainly on the conventions of positivistic research methodology and tends to ignore the "why" questions. It does not offer much guidance on why particular objectives need consideration or are worthwhile, or why stakeholders agree or disagree on the worth of the objectives (Borg & Gall, 1989).

Quantitative evaluation research methods have several weaknesses. One weakness is that many online courses or programmes have small number of learners from various backgrounds. This inevitably confounds the relevant statistical analysis. Second, quantitative surveys typically result in return rates of fewer than 50 percent. Third, forced-choice surveys offer respondents a limited number of possible response options. Lastly, statistical analysis often results in an illusion of precision that is far from reality (University of Illinois, 2000).

A qualitative evaluation approach is subjective rather than objective, involves gathering a wide range and depth of information, is more difficult to tabulate into neat categories, is less affected by typical small class size and is more flexible and dynamic than quantitative approach. In addition, it is characterised by open-ended questioning. To gather data, it uses participant and non-participant observation, including interviews. It uses content analysis to scrutinise the data.

Qualitative evaluation research emerged when researchers tried to address the weaknesses of the quantitative evaluation approach. Stake (1978) was among the first writers to develop a qualitative responsive approach to educational research focusing on the concerns and issues affecting the stakeholders. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four major phases that ought to occur in such an evaluation approach. The first phase involves initiating and organising the evaluation whereby the evaluator and client negotiate the evaluation contract. The second phase is to identify the concerns, issues and values of the stakeholders through interviews and questionnaires. The third phase is to gather information pertaining to the concerns, issues and values of the stakeholders. The final phase is to prepare a report of the results and make recommendations.

### **3.6. Theoretical framework**

Conceptual frameworks are used as guides for action. In evaluating the online course for distance education policy-makers in the SADC region, the evaluator adapted Stufflebeam et al.'s (1971) conceptual framework. Stufflebeam et al. developed this framework to evaluate the worthiness of educational programmes, especially their contexts, inputs, processes and products.

*Context evaluation* involves identifying problems and needs in a specific education setting. *Input evaluation* focuses on judgements about the resources and strategies needed to accomplish programme goals and objectives. Information collected during this stage of

evaluation helps decision-makers choose the best possible resources and strategies within constraints. Input evaluation deals with issues such as whether resources are too expensive or unavailable, whether particular strategies are effective or ineffective in achieving programme goals and objectives, whether certain strategies are legally or morally acceptable and whether personnel resources are used efficiently. *Process evaluation* involves the collection of data after the programme is designed and put into operation. *Product evaluation* determines the extent to which the goals of the programme are achieved.

Barker (n.d.), drawing from Stufflebeam et al.'s conceptual framework of contexts, inputs, processes and products, enumerates indicators of quality processes and practices that can be used to assess online distance education programmes. He groups them into three categories:

- (i) Student management
- (ii) Learning management
- (iii) Use of technologies

Student management indicators of quality processes and practices include registration procedures, assurance that learners have background knowledge and technical skills to undertake the course, a clear statement of expectations for learners and an orientation programme for learners.

Learning management indicators of quality processes and practice include teaching processes that communicate high expectations, provide prompt feedback to learners, respect diverse talents of learners and their ways of learning, recognise the diversity of learners and their learning needs, acknowledge learning contexts and modes of learning, and respond to individual learners. They also include approaches to learning that foster active learning, emphasise time on task and build on learners' strengths and acquired skills

and knowledge. Quality learning management accommodates different individuals' learning styles and supports interaction and the development of learning communities. It increases learner control over time, place and pace of instruction, provides a flexible schedule for learners and uses appropriate technology for learning.

Quality inputs and resources associated with technology-assisted distance learning cover several dimensions. First, they include clearly stated, observable, demonstrable, measurable, achievable, useful and appropriate objectives. Second, they include a credible, academically respected, accurate, relevant, balanced and culturally sensitive curriculum. Third, they include the selection and use of teaching/learning materials that are prepared by qualified content experts, readily available, learner-friendly, interesting in content and layout, affordable, well-organised and free of errors or cultural, racial, class and gender bias. Fourth, they include a well-organised course that has objectives, information about the instructors, learning notes and additional learning resources, course activities and assignments, quizzes and examinations, answers to quizzes and questions, and a portfolio of acquired learning. Fifth, they should have a sound technical design so that learning materials and delivery methods are navigable, updated, complemented by graphics, reliable and complete. Finally, they must be taught by qualified course tutors.

The University of Illinois (2000) has provided a similar list of indicators that evaluators are advised to consider when evaluating an online education programme. The indicators include the following:

- (i) The use of technology by participants (familiarity, concerns, problems, positive aspects and attitudes towards the technology)
- (ii) The effectiveness of lectures, discussions, questions and answers in a class environment
- (iii) The quality of questions or problems raised in a class format environment
- (iv) The quality of encouraging learners to express themselves

Second, the indicators include:

- (i) The quantity and quality of interaction with other students and with instructors
- (ii) The relevancy, adequacy, body of knowledge and organisation of course content as well as its usefulness and degree of difficulty
- (iii) The time required and taken to give feedback on assignments

Finally, the indicators include:

- (i) The readability level of print materials
- (ii) The availability of support services (facilitator, instructor, technology and library)
- (iii) The level of students' achievement
- (iv) The contribution of facilitators as discussion leaders and organisers

The evaluator found the conceptual frameworks and indicators reviewed in the preceding section useful in providing a framework for evaluating the online course for policy-makers in distance education within the SADC region. Indeed, the aspects of the conceptual framework reviewed in the preceding section had similar elements to those of the online course that was evaluated, such as context, inputs, process, products and quality indicators.

## **4.0. Chapter Four: Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

As soon as the online course was launched on the SAIDE Web site, the course facilitator provided the evaluator with the list of participants, their e-mail addresses and the group e-mail address, the SAIDE Web site address and the CD-ROM. The evaluation focused on the three phases of the online course:

- (i) The pre-workshop period
- (ii) The one-week face-to-face period in Maputo
- (iii) The post-workshop period

### **4.2. Methods of evaluating**

The methods of evaluating the online course included, among others, questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of documents, e-mail messages and learning activities. The evaluator received all the e-mails exchanged between and among the participants and course facilitators. Therefore, he was able to monitor contributions of the participants and course facilitators, the quality of the discussions, the quality of assignments completed by participants and the pace at which participants were progressing in the course.

### **4.3. Data-gathering instruments**

Questionnaires were administered online through e-mails and at the face-to-face workshop in Maputo. Both the formal and informal interviews were conducted at the face-to-face workshop in Maputo and by telephone. In constructing questionnaires and interview items, as well as the design and format, the evaluator was guided by instruments from the literature review, including one from The Commonwealth of Learning for evaluating



workshops. The evaluator constructed three sets of questionnaires, one each for the pre-workshop period, the face-to-face workshop in Maputo and the post-workshop period (see Appendices 2, 3, 4). The content of questionnaires covered the whole spectrum of the online course including its organisation and management, design and layout of the Web site and the CD-ROM, quality of content, course delivery online, quality of participants' work activity, etc.

The questionnaires contained both structured and open-ended items. The evaluation process started at the launch of the online course. The evaluator, like all course participants, sent an introductory e-mail to participants, defining his role as the evaluator of the online course and appealing for participants' co-operation in this regard. He analysed data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The next section presents the findings.

## **5.0. Chapter Five: Findings**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter has three parts. The first part presents the results of the evaluation of the online course before the workshop in Maputo. The second part presents the results of the evaluation of the one week face-to-face workshop in Maputo. The third part presents the results of the evaluation of the online course after the face-to-face workshop.

#### **5.1.0. Findings: Prior to the Maputo workshop**

##### **5.1.1. Administration of the questionnaire**

At the Maputo workshop, the evaluator administered a questionnaire to the 18 participants and four course facilitators and also conducted some formal and informal interviews covering the period prior to the Maputo face-to-face workshop. This pre-workshop period

covered the participants' introduction to the online course, course registration, mode of delivery and its assumptions, and learning activities participants had to undertake prior to, and in preparation for, the Maputo workshop. Only 17 course participants and one course facilitator successfully completed the questionnaire. One participant, the local contact person, was unable to complete the questionnaire because he was in and out of the workshop. Another participant had no access to a computer and so had hardly completed any of the pre-workshop activities.

The questionnaire and the interviews covered participants' level of anxiety and excitement about the online course; their level of preparedness for the online course; their computer literacy, knowledge and skills; their access to computing facilities and the Internet; and the quality of computer facilities. In addition, the questionnaire sought to determine the usefulness of instructions and advice in the CD-ROM, including instructions and advice associated with course delivery, sending e-mails, making use of the help files on the CD-ROM and participating in the group discussions. The questionnaire and interviews also asked participants to indicate the problems encountered while undertaking the learning activities and how such problems could be resolved in future.

### **5.1.2. Background learning activities**

Before proceeding with the online course, participants had to complete two introductory learning activities. In the first introductory activity, participants introduced themselves to their colleagues through e-mails indicating who they were, the country from which they came, their place of work, position held, what they did, why they were interested in the course and what they hoped to accomplish from the course.

For the second introductory activity, course participants described two policies from their respective countries: one that they considered successful and another that they considered unsuccessful. Participants also had to explain why they considered the policies to be

successful or unsuccessful. Participants were told that if at any time they were uncertain about what they should do, they could simply click on the “Facilitator” button at the top of the screen to send a query to the facilitator.

The CD-ROM had hyperlinks that participants clicked to send e-mails. It also generated a predefined subject heading for e-mails. For the second introductory activity, all the participants had to do was insert the correct e-mail address and then send the short e-mail and an attachment on the two policies to the group. If participants were not sure of how to do this, the CD-ROM contained help files on how to send and receive e-mails. The CD-ROM advised participants to participate in the group discussions and get involved once the e-mail responses started flowing. The estimated time for the two introductory learning activities was approximately two hours. Participants were advised to spend about 45 minutes preparing the introduction, and one hour 15 minutes reading the responses from other members of the group and participating in the ensuing discussion.

The first learning activity participants had to complete before the Maputo face-to-face workshop was a response to a fictitious confidential memo from the minister of education. This memo, prepared by course designers, outlined the minister’s vision for distance education in the country. The minister urgently requested the reader’s response to this memo as the minister was interested in knowing the existing policies in the country and how such policies could be affected by the minister’s proposal. Second, the minister wanted to find out if the vision he or she had sketched out was relevant and whether the resources that would have to be mobilised (i.e., existing infrastructure, human capacity and finances) to implement the vision were appropriate, realistic and practical.

Participants read the minister’s memorandum and then responded to the questions raised. In addition, they were required to describe briefly how they would amend the vision if they thought it needed amendments. To assist participants in answering the questions, the

course constructors prepared an activity template in Microsoft Word that participants could use to complete the learning activity.

The CD-ROM advised participants about what to look for and how to respond when receiving responses from other participants. In particular, the CD-ROM advised them to consider the following questions: “Do I agree/disagree with other people’s responses? How relevant are other people’s responses to my country? What do I think is missing from these responses?”

The estimated time for completing this learning activity was from two to four hours. The CD-ROM advised participants to spend 15 minutes reading the minister’s memorandum and from one to two hours preparing the response. At the end of the learning activity, participants had time to reflect on it briefly in order to contextualise what they had just done within the overall course. In addition, they were advised to begin browsing through one or two national case studies, included on the CD-ROM, in order to get a sense of how different countries were approaching the problem of developing relevant policies.

The first learning activity was an “icebreaker” with the following objectives:

- (i) Encourage participants to begin to think about what constitutes a policy vision and to relate this thinking back to the context of their countries
- (ii) Give participants a sense of their current understanding of key issues relating to policy development
- (iii) Provide participants with an opportunity to share preliminary ideas and get to know each other and learn about each participant’s country of origin
- (iv) Introduce an activity “theme” for developing a national policy that will be continued throughout the course and link it to the outcomes

Course designers hoped that the activity would contribute to participants' ability to analyse a given educational context and develop a vision for open learning in that context.

### 5.1.3. Participants' level of anxiety and excitement about the online course

When individuals are asked to participate in a training programme, they normally have different feelings about it. One aspect of the feeling is excitement. Participants get excited because they hope to gain new skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enhance their job performance.

On the other hand, they become anxious because they are not sure if they will be able to cope with the demands of the training programme, especially if the mode of training is unfamiliar to them. In light of this reasoning, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate how they felt when they received invitations to participate in the online course. The participants' responses regarding their feelings are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Feeling of participants before joining the online course**

Feeling of participants when asked to join the course	Participants	Percentage
Very anxious	4	24%
Very excited	6	35%
Somewhat anxious	2	12%
Somewhat excited	5	29%
Least anxious	0	0%
Least excited	0	0%
Total	17	100%

Overall, Table 1 shows that participants were both excited and anxious about the online course. Of the 17 participants, 10 (59%) indicated that they were very excited and very anxious about the online course. The remaining participants (41%) indicated that they were somewhat excited and somewhat anxious about the online course.

#### **5.1.4. Participants' reasons for anxiety and excitement about the online course**

The questionnaire asked participants to explain why they felt excited and anxious about the online course. Participants' reasons for being excited and anxious ranged from the anxiety of seeing the relationship between the CD-ROM materials and face-to-face workshop to the anticipation of dialoguing with other participants through e-mail, being apprehensive about the mode of learning, and looking forward to understanding policy formulation; designing, developing and implementing distance education; and acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes on distance education.

- I was very anxious because I would see the relationship between the CD-ROM materials and the face-to-face learning. I also wanted to dialogue with other colleagues through e-mail. (Participant 1)
- I was somewhat excited because I thought the course would help me understand policy development in distance education. I guess this is related to the policy framework we are doing now in this workshop. (Participant 2)
- I was very anxious because this was the first time for me to participate in an online course and the curriculum seemed very relevant to my work. (Participant 3)
- I was very excited because as an open and distance learning manager who had not had professional training on the course, I felt the course would equip me with skills I needed most. (Participant 4)
- I felt somewhat excited because the online course provided me with a golden opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to design policies. (Participant 5)
- I was somewhat excited because I was looking forward to exploring ideas with colleagues on policy information and development. (Participant 7)
- I was somewhat anxious because I did not know what the course entailed since I had very little experience in planning and designing policies. (Participant 10)
- I was very anxious and excited because I was not computer literate and I expected to be equipped with knowledge, skills, understanding and values in distance education, policy development process, management of distance education programmes, etc. (Participant 11)

- I was very anxious because I did not have formal training on distance education prior to this course, and it was just a surprise to me to even think of how I would cope with an online course. (Participant 12)

It was anticipated that once participants were familiar with the delivery mode of the online course, their level of anxiety would decline. One of the objectives of this study was to determine whether the participants' level of anxiety about taking the online course had changed after three weeks of participation, and why. Subsequently, at the Maputo workshop participants were asked to indicate their level of anxiety now that they had been participating in the online course for about three weeks. Table 2 indicates participants' level of anxiety about the online course after three weeks of participation.

**Table 2: Participants' level of anxiety after three weeks of participating in online course**

Level of anxiety after three weeks	Participants	Percentage
Very anxious	4	24%
Somewhat anxious	6	35%
Least anxious	1	6%
Not anxious at all	6	35%
Total	17	100%

Table 2 indicates that after three weeks of participation the level of anxiety of the majority of participants declined. Of the 17 participants, only four (24%) indicated that they were still very anxious about the online course. Of the remaining participants, six (35%) indicated that they were somewhat anxious, and one participant (6%) indicated that he was least anxious about the online course. The remaining six (35%) participants indicated that they were not anxious at all about the online course.

The questionnaire asked participants to explain their level of anxiety after having been enrolled in the online course for three weeks. The reasons put forward by participants who were still very anxious about the online course included the high volume of work to be

done, the large quantity of recommended reference materials to be read and the tight schedule for completing the assigned activities on the CD-ROM.

- I am still very anxious because I have a lot of things to read and to do in the CD-ROM. (Participant 1)
- I still feel very anxious because I need to learn more and understand policy development processes. (Participant 2)
- I am very anxious because I have not had time to make my input, but I have benefited and enjoyed the first e-mail responses from other participants. (Participant 3)

The reasons provided by participants who were somewhat anxious about the online course included, among others, that they were behind the course schedule, were failing to keep pace with the demands of the course, were unable to complete the assigned learning activities on time and had not started working on the assigned learning activities.

- I am somewhat anxious because the time available makes it difficult for me to keep pace. (Participant 4)
- I am still somewhat anxious because before coming to the face-to-face session I had hardly started. Although I don't feel I am far behind, I still feel I am disadvantaged and want to do the earlier exercises. (Participant 12)

Participants who indicated they were not anxious about the online course after participating for three weeks gave responses ranging from comments that they found the course user-friendly, interesting and enjoyable to acknowledgements that the course had clearly stated objectives, met participants' expectations and allowed for communication with other participants and completion of learning activities.

- I am not anxious. The course is interesting and I am convinced that my expectations are being met, hence I am enjoying it. (Participant 5)
- I am not anxious at all. I enjoy the course and it is an eye-opener. (Participant 7)
- I am not anxious now because of the relaxed approach and the user-friendly process of learning. (Participant 8)



- I am not anxious because the approach is good and I can communicate easily with other participants and get feedback from the tutors. (Participant 9)
- I am not anxious now because I am familiar with the course objectives, and the challenges built into the course are motivating and exciting. (Participant 10)
- I am not anxious now because I am comfortable with doing the course online and have very little difficulty with the technology. (Participant 14)
- I am not anxious now because I have settled down quite well and have managed to complete some of the activities that we were asked to do. (Participant 15)

### 5.1.5. Participants' level of preparedness for the online course

Because this was an online course, it was critically important that participants had prior preparation for it. Therefore, they were asked to indicate their level of preparedness for the course. Table 3 indicates their responses to this question.

**Table 3: Participants' level of preparedness for the online course**

Level of preparedness	Participants	Percentage
Well prepared	1	6%
Somewhat prepared	7	41%
Least prepared	6	35%
Not prepared at all	3	18%
Total	17	100%

Table 3 indicates that only one participant (6%) felt well prepared for the online course. The rest of the 16 participants felt that they were somewhat prepared (41%), least prepared (35%) or not prepared at all (18%). The participant who indicated that he was well prepared for the online course pointed out that the CD-ROM explained quite clearly what he was supposed to do and how he should use the materials provided as well as how to send e-mails to other participants.

- I was well prepared. I was sent a CD-ROM in time and it explained exactly what I was supposed to do and how I should find information. This made me start appreciating computer skills. (Participant 6)

The reasons given by participants who felt that they were only somewhat prepared ranged from time constraints to interruptions by other activities, unfamiliarity with the technology for the online course, lack of prior knowledge on policy development processes and lack of awareness that the course had a lot of reading materials.

- I was somewhat prepared because the times allocated for the learning activities prior to the Maputo workshop were too close to each other. (Participant 1)
- I was somewhat prepared because I had attended a few courses in UK and Tunisia. These courses exposed me to the use of ICT [information and communication technology] in ODL. But my institution had not got the Internet until recently. (Participant 2)
- I was somewhat prepared, but then I was interrupted by issues that cropped up and I had not anticipated these disruptions. (Participant 3)
- I was somewhat prepared. The technology being used was familiar to me and I had already had an idea of policies on distance education which the country has been attempting to develop. (Participant 9)
- I was somewhat prepared because I have done a study of policy implementing before this course. (Participant 14)
- I was somewhat prepared because I did not realise it would involve such a large amount of reading and research. (Participant 15)

The reasons put forward by least prepared participants ranged from not being familiar with online learning to not knowing how to use a CD-ROM, inability to complete the pre-workshop activities, lack of computer skills, limited access to a computer and the Internet and lack of prior preparation for the course.

- I was least prepared because I was using the CD-ROM for the first time. It was a good experience though! (Participant 4)
- I was least prepared because I didn't know much about online courses. (Participant 5)
- I was least prepared because I had not seriously started on the pre-workshop activities and did not have much computer literacy or easy access to a computer and the Internet. (Participant 6)
- I was least prepared because I was only waiting for the materials to be communicated to me. (Participant 12)
- I was least prepared because there was no prior preparation for me before embarking on this course. (Participant 13)

The questionnaire asked participants who were not prepared for the online course to explain why. Participants' reasons included inability to access a computer and the Internet, lack of computer literacy skills and relying on someone else's computer.

- I was not prepared because I did not have a computer. Therefore, I could not do the planned activities. (Participant 8)
- I was not prepared because I had never used a computer before. I needed some tips on how to use one. (Participant 16)
- I was not prepared in any serious sense, but I was looking forward to it. (Participant 7)
- I was not prepared because I didn't have any of the gadgets needed, except for the CD-ROM; I depended on a friend. (Participant 12)

#### **5.1.6. Computer literacy**

Online delivery of the course on policy development presupposed that participants were computer literate and that they had basic computer knowledge and skills to manipulate a computer and use the Internet. Against this backdrop, the questionnaire asked participants to rate their level of computer literacy. This study operationally defined computer literacy as participants' level of knowledge of, and ability to use, a word-processing package. Second,

it defined computer literacy as participants' ability to prepare and send e-mail messages, browse for information on the Internet and view the CD-ROM.

**Table 4: Participants' rating of their level of computer literacy**

Level of computer literacy	Below average (%)	Average (%)	Above average (%)
Word processing	3 (18%)	9 (53%)	5 (29%)
Preparing and sending e-mail	4 (24%)	6 (35%)	7 (41%)
Browsing the Internet for information	6 (35%)	5 (29%)	6 (35%)
Using a CD-ROM	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	8 (47%)

According to Table 4, the majority of the participants indicated that their level of knowledge and skills regarding word processing, preparing and sending e-mail messages, browsing for information on the Internet and using a CD-ROM was either average or above average. Of the 17 participants, 13 (76%) rated their level of computer literacy to be either average or above average. Conversely, only four (24%) participants, on average, rated their level of computer literacy to be below average.

#### **5.1.7. Access to computers**

Another presupposition of an online course is that participants will have access to a computer either at work or at home or both. One of the objectives of this study was to determine whether participants did have access to a computer, and if they did, whether it was an institutional or a personal computer, whether it was shared with others and when they were able to access it. Table 5 shows participants' responses to these questions.

**Table 5: Access to, ownership of and sharing of a computer for the online course**

Variable	Participants (N=17)	Percentage (100%)
<u>Access to a computer</u>		
Yes	16	94%
No	1	6%
<u>Owner of a computer</u>		
Personal computer	0	0%
Institutional computer	13	81%
Both personal and institutional computer	3	19%
<u>Computer shared</u>		
Yes	5	31%
No	11	69%
<u>Time computer accessed</u>		
During working hours only	7	44%
After working hours only	0	0%
Anytime	9	56%

Table 5 indicates that of the 17 participants, 16 (94%) had access to computers for the online course. Only one (6%) participant had no access. Of the 16 participants who had access to computers, 13 (81%) used institutional computers for the online course, while three (19%) used both institutional and personal computers. In other words, only three participants had personal computers.

Of the 16 participants who had access to computers, five (31%) shared them with other people, while 11 (69%) did not share them with anyone. Nine (56%) of these participants could access them for the online course at any time, while seven (44%) could only access them during working hours. In summary, the majority of the participants did not have personal computers, but they did have access to institutional computers they did not share with anyone else and that they could use anytime for the online course.

### 5.1.8. Computer models

The questionnaire asked participants to indicate the model and features of the computers they used for the online course. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the computer brand they had access to (i.e., whether it was a 486, Pentium, Pentium 2, Pentium 3, Pentium 4 or Macintosh). In addition, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether the computers had a CD-ROM drive, Internet connectivity and/or e-mail facilities. Table 6 shows their responses to these questions.

**Table 6: Model and features of the computer used for the online course**

Variable	Participants	Percentage
<u>Type of computer</u>		
No computer	1	6%
No idea of the type of computer	7	41%
486 computer	1	6%
Pentium 1 computer	2	12%
Pentium 2 computer	2	12%
Pentium 3 computer	2	12%
Pentium 4 computer	1	6%
Macintosh	1	6%
Total	17	100%
<u>Features of the computer</u>		
	<u>Yes (%)</u>	<u>No (%)</u>
Does this computer have a CD-ROM drive?	16 (100%)	0 (0%)
Is this computer connected to the Internet?	14 (88%)	2 (12%)
Do you have an e-mail address?	14 (88%)	2 (12%)
Do you know how to access e-mail?	14 (88%)	2 (12%)

Table 6 shows that of the 17 participants, 9 (54%) had an idea of the model of the computer they were using for the online course. Seven of the participants (41%) had no idea of the model of their computer. One participant used a 486 computer and another used a Macintosh computer. One participant (6%) had no computer. Six participants (36%) had access to Pentiums 1 to 3. One participant had access to a Pentium 4. All the

computers used for the online course had CD-ROM drives, however only 14 (88%) of the 16 computers had Internet connectivity. Of the 16 participants who had access to computers, 14 (88%) had e-mail addresses. Those 14 participants knew how to use the e-mail facility.

### 5.1.9. Helpfulness of tutorial instructions on the CD-ROM

The success of delivering the online course depended largely on participants' ability to use e-mail. It was, therefore, critically important that all course participants learned as early as possible how to compile, send and open e-mail messages. One of the first activities in the course involved learning how to use e-mail. One aim of this study was to establish whether course participants found the instructions for this activity helpful. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they had found the instructions on how to use e-mail helpful. Table 7 indicates the participants' responses.

**Table 7: Participants' responses on helpfulness of the instructions on how to use e-mail**

Degree of helpfulness	Participants	Percentage
Very helpful	5	29%
Somewhat helpful	5	29%
Not helpful	3	18%
No response	3	18%
No computer	1	6%
Total	17	100%

Of the 17 participants, 10 (58%) indicated that they found the instructions on how to use e-mail helpful. Of these 10, half said they found the instruction very helpful, while the other half felt that it was somewhat helpful. Three participants (18%) indicated that the instructions were not helpful, and three (18%) participants did not respond to this question, while one (6%) had no computer. Some of the participants who did not respond already

knew how to use the e-mail facility before they took the course. In conclusion, of the course participants who responded to this question, the majority found the instructions on how to use e-mail useful.

The participants who said that the instructions were helpful explained that the hints on how to go about sending an e-mail were very clear and straightforward. These participants had no problems following the instructions.

- The instructions were very helpful and the hints were clear. (Participant 15)
- The instructions were very clear and straightforward to me. I had no problem following them. (Participant 10)
- It was helpful because it provided a short cut to sending e-mails to group members. (Participant 4)

#### **5.1.10. Mode of accessing the online course**

Course designers recognised that some participants might not have access to the Internet, so they created a CD-ROM through which participants could access the course. The assumption was that participants who did not have Internet connectivity but did have access to computers with CD-ROM drives could still participate in the course and complete the assigned activities. They would copy the assigned activities onto diskettes and then use colleagues' computers with Internet connectivity to send and receive e-mails. The evaluator was interested in finding out the mode by which participants accessed the online course. Table 8 indicates participants' responses to this question.



**Table 8: Mode of accessing the online course**

Mode of accessing the online course	Participants	Percentage
Through the Internet only	1	6%
Through a CD-ROM only	10	63%
Through both the Internet and the CD-ROM	5	31%
Total	16	100%

Table 8 shows that of the 16 participants who had access to a computer, only one participant accessed the online course through the Internet only. About two-thirds of the participants (63%) accessed the online course through a CD-ROM only. The rest of the participants (31%) accessed the online course through both the Internet and the CD-ROM facility. In summary, a majority of the participants accessed the online course through the CD-ROM only.

#### **5.1.11. Internet browsers**

Internet users prefer certain browsers to surf the Internet, though this is not to say that one browser is superior to the other. In order to find out the type of browser course participants used to access the online course, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate their browser. Table 9 shows their responses.

**Table 9: Type of browsers**

Type of browser	Participants	Percentage
Internet Explorer	2	12%
Netscape Navigator	1	6%
No idea what	13	76%
No computer	1	6%
Total	17	100%

According to Table 9, most of the course participants did not know what browser their computers had. Of the 17 course participants, 13 (82%) indicated that they had no idea what Internet browser they were using. Only three (18%) participants knew what browser they were using to access the online course. Two participants (12%) used Internet Explorer, while one participant (6%) used Netscape Navigator. One possible reason most course participants had no idea of the browser they were using could be lack of knowledge or understanding of what a browser is.

#### **5.1.12. Problems experienced by participants**

Despite the fact that most of the course participants indicated their level of computer literacy was above average, it is possible that some could still have experienced problems accessing the course content either on the Internet or the CD-ROM, and/or when composing, sending or receiving their e-mails. The questionnaire asked participants to state problems they encountered while accessing the online course on the Internet or CD-ROM and/or when using e-mail. In addition, the questionnaire asked course participants to describe the nature of the problems they encountered and how they tried to resolve them. Table 10 shows the participants' responses.

***Table 10: Problems experienced by participants while accessing the online course through the Internet or on the CD-ROM***

Problems experienced by participants	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
On the Internet	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	5 (31%)
With the CD-ROM	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	11 (69%)
Total	8 (50%)	8 (50%)	16 (100%)

Table 10 indicates that five (31%) participants accessed the online course through the Internet and 11 (69%) participants accessed the course through the CD-ROM. Of the five participants who accessed the online course through the Internet, only one participant

experienced problems. The problem was the slowness of the computer (low retrieval capability) in accessing the Web site. The computer was very slow because of its small memory. Of the 11 participants who indicated that they accessed the online course on the CD-ROM, seven (64%) said they experienced some problems and four (36%) did not.

Overall, of the 16 participants who accessed the online course through the Internet and/or the CD-ROM, half indicated that they experienced problems, while the other half said they did not experience any problems. The problems experienced by course participants included inability to access the Internet, inability to read the CD-ROM and portable document format (PDF) files, as well as inability to open or send file attachments. The participant who was using a Macintosh computer reported that he had difficulty reading information on the CD.

- I failed to read the CD. (Participant 1)
- Most of my messages could not go through, nor was I able to open the attachments on CD. (Participant 2)
- I tried to get help from my colleagues without success and then ended up abandoning the exercise. (Participant 3)
- PDF files were difficult to access. (Participant 4)
- I could not access the PDF files that had an explanation on how to access these files. (Participant 6)
- After I had completed the activity, I had difficulty sending the attachment. (Participant 7)
- The CD did not function properly on the IMAC or I-Book. (Participant 14)

### **5.1.13. How participants dealt with the problems**

Participants were asked to explain how they dealt with problems they encountered while trying to access the course on CD or the Internet. Participants whose computers had small memory (RAM) did not do anything to upgrade them because they were institutional

computers. The institutions were not in a position to upgrade them due to lack of funds. Therefore, as one participant commented, “it meant sitting in front of a computer for long hours” (Participant 16). Some participants asked colleagues who were familiar with the Internet to teach them how to use e-mail and access the CD contents using the CD-ROM drives. Those who were able to access information on the CD-ROM but had difficulty sending e-mails and opening or sending attachments continued to read the “how to” instructions on the CD. Some succeeded; others did not and gave up. One participant who had problems opening a PDF file sent an SOS e-mail to the group for help. Some other participants’ responses are listed below.

- I used to ask other colleagues at work to help me. (Participant 1)
- I am still to learn about opening a PDF file and sending or reading a file attachment. (Participant 4)
- I asked colleagues to teach me how to use an e-mail, the CD-ROM, and send or read file attachments. (Participant 11)
- For the PDF file, I had to e-mail the group for help. I learnt that I was not the only one who had a problem. (Participant 13)

#### **5.1.14. Helpfulness of introductory notes**

Course facilitators placed some introductory notes on the CD-ROM explaining the purpose, content, structure, expected outcomes and mode of delivery of the online course. In an attempt to determine the value of the introductory notes, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate the extent to which they were helpful. Table 11 shows the responses of the participants to this question.

**Table 11: Helpfulness of the facilitators' introductory notes about the online course**

Degree of helpfulness	Not helpful (%)	Helpful (%)	Very helpful (%)	No response (%)
On the purpose of the course	0 (0%)	2 (12%)	14 (87%)	0 (0%)
On the content of the course	0 (0%)	3 (19%)	13 (81%)	0 (0%)
On the structure of the course	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	12 (75%)	0 (0%)
On the learning outcomes	0 (0%)	5 (31%)	10 (63%)	1 (6%)

Overall, most participants seemed to find the notes on the purpose, content, structure, expected outcomes and mode of delivery of the online course very helpful. None of the 17 participants indicated that these notes were not helpful. With the exception of the category on “learning outcomes,” more than two-thirds of the participants indicated that the introductory notes were very helpful to them.

#### **5.1.15. E-mails sent during introductory activities**

The online course's introductory learning activities required participants to send e-mails introducing themselves and describing two policies in their countries. Subsequently, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether they were successful in sending these introductory e-mails. The questionnaire also asked the participants to indicate how long it took them to do so. The responses of the participants are indicated in Table 12.

**Table 12: Participants' success rate in sending e-mails and file attachments for the introductory learning activities**

Participants' success or failure in sending e-mail	Participants	Percentage
Successful	12	75%
Unsuccessful	4	25%
Total	16	100%
Period taken to send the e-mail		
One to three days	0	0%
Four to seven days	10	83%
Two weeks	0	0%
Three weeks	2	17%
Total	12	100%

Table 12 shows that of the 16 participants who had access to computers, three-quarters (75%) successfully sent e-mails introducing themselves and describing the two policies in their countries. Only four participants (25%) failed to send these introductory e-mails.

In addition, Table 12 shows that of the 12 participants who successfully sent the e-mails, 10 participants (83%) sent e-mails within four to seven days. The other two participants (17%) succeeded in sending e-mails within three weeks. Apparently none of the participants managed to send e-mails within three days of the commencement of the online course.

#### **5.1.16. Reasons for not succeeding in sending introductory e-mails**

The questionnaire asked participants who could not send the introductory e-mails to provide reasons for their inability to do so. Some participants explained that they were out of the country. Therefore, it was not possible for them to access their electronic mail. Other participants explained that they were so heavily involved with workplace duties that they failed to get time to attend to this activity. Still other participants explained that they failed to send e-mails because of their low level of computer literacy. One participant explained that the first e-mail she tried to send got lost in cyberspace. The second e-mail was successfully mailed out, but she had no idea where it went. E-mails she prepared later could not go through.

- I didn't have time to do this first activity because I was out of the country. I could not access my e-mail where I was. I will try and catch-up though. (Participant 1)
- The first one got lost in the computer. When I prepared the second one, it incidentally got mail out. I do not know to whom it went. Other e-mails I sent apparently did not reach the group. (Participant 2)
- I became heavily involved in other duties at my workplace and could not find time to do this activity. (Participant 3)
- I didn't have time to do this activity and also my computer literacy skills were extremely low. (Participant 11)

#### **5.1.17. Helpfulness of the facilitators' advice**

Course facilitators advised course participants to spend at least two hours on the activities in which they introduced themselves and described two of their country's policies. This was the amount of time facilitators thought would be adequate for the participants to work on the activities. The questionnaire asked participants if they took heed of this advice and if they found it helpful, and also to indicate the amount of time they took to complete the activities. The responses of the participants are indicated in Table 13.

**Table 13: Helpfulness of the facilitators' advice and the actual amount of time participants spent on the activities**

Helpfulness of the advice on time to be taken on each activity	Participants	Percentage
Yes, it was helpful	10	59%
No, it was not helpful	3	18%
Did not respond	4	23%
Total	17	100%
Time spent preparing the first e-mail	Participants	Percentage
One hour	8	57%
Two hours	3	22%
Three hours	2	14%
Four hours	1	7%
Total	14	100%

Table 13 indicates that the majority of the participants were of the view that the course facilitators' advice regarding the amount of time that should be spent preparing and sending the e-mails in the introductory activities was helpful. Of the 17 participants, more than half (59%) indicated that the advice was helpful. Only three participants (18%) thought that it was not helpful at all. Four participants (23%) did not respond to this item.

The questionnaire asked participants to explain how the facilitators' advice was helpful to them. Most participants pointed out that it was helpful because it enabled them to manage their time. It also guided them in terms of the amount of information they needed to include in the e-mail message. This is what they said:

- It enabled me to manage my time better and indicate to me roughly how detailed the response should be. (Participant 5)



- The time limit gave me an indication of how much time I needed to engage in this activity. At least I knew that more than an hour was needed. So I was not put off. (Participant 6)
- It was good as a guideline and enabled me to set my work pace. (Participant 7)
- It helped me manage my time and indicated the depth of analysis for the activity. (Participant 10)
- It helped me because I could see if I was moving at the same speed as the facilitators' expectations and when I saw I was a bit slow, I picked up my pace. (Participant 12)
- It was helpful because it showed me that the activity was not going to take a lot of my valuable time. (Participant 14)

Those participants who felt that the course facilitators' advice was not helpful at all pointed out that the activities took more than two hours to complete. Other participants pointed out that two hours was too long a time for these activities. In any event, due to heavy workload and tight work schedule, some participants could not devote two hours to do the activities.

- It was not helpful to me because I simply could not find time to devote to that exercise. (Participant 11)
- It was not that helpful because one would take whatever time needed to do the activity. It depended on the amount of information one had to say about himself and the two country policies. (Participant 13)

Table 13 also indicates that the majority of participants spent about one hour on the activity. Of the 14 participants who responded to this question, eight (57%) spent about an hour preparing the e-mail message. Three (22%) spent two hours, two (14%) spent three hours, and one (7%) spent four hours. In conclusion, it would seem that the time suggested by the course facilitators to complete these activities was more than adequate since more than three-quarters (79%) of the participants completed them within one to two hours.

### **5.1.18. Helpfulness of e-mail discussions**

One of the key aspects of an online course is the expectation that participants and course facilitators will engage in discussions about the learning activities that they have prepared and sent to the group by e-mail as file attachments. Indeed, the group was expected to send constructive critical comments and observations on the completed activities via e-mail. The evaluator was interested in soliciting the number of participants who had actually received comments from other course participants as well as from course facilitators.

In addition, the evaluator wanted to determine individual participants' feelings regarding the extent to which the comments and observations from the group and course facilitators were helpful. Therefore, participants were asked to indicate whether they had received comments on the learning activity they had e-mailed to the group and the facilitators and whether they felt these comments were helpful. Table 14 indicates the number of participants who received comments. It also shows the participants' feelings regarding the helpfulness of the group's and facilitators' comments.

**Table 14: Number of e-mails received from the group and course facilitators and the extent to which they were helpful**

E-mail received from colleagues commenting on activity	Participants	Percentage
Yes, I did receive some e-mails from colleagues	6	35%
No, I did not receive e-mails from colleagues	11	65%
Total	17	100%
Helpfulness of colleagues' comments on activities	Participants	Percentage
Very helpful	1	6%
Somewhat helpful	4	23%
Least helpful	0	0%
Not helpful	1	6%
No response	11	65%
Total	17	100%
Helpfulness of facilitators' comments on activities	Participants	Percentage
Very helpful	2	12%
Somewhat helpful	6	35%
Least helpful	0	0%
Not helpful	0	0%
No response	9	53%
Total	7	100%

Table 14 shows that the majority of the participants did not respond to this item, partly because they had not done the activities before attending the face-to-face workshop in Maputo, and partly because they had not received comments from colleagues and/or course facilitators. Six participants (35%) did receive comments from colleagues. Of this number, five participants (83%) felt that the comments were helpful, while one participant (17%) felt that they were not helpful.

Participants found the comments of colleagues and course facilitators helpful for reasons ranging from the interest they raised to the encouragement, support and confidence-building they provided. One participant indicated that he was so busy with other workplace activities that he did not have time to read the comments.

- The comments from colleagues were helpful because the views they presented to me were interesting. (Participant 2)
- I did not find time to read them and to respond to them. (Participant 11)
- The course facilitator responded and gave her advice of where to look for the policy. (Participant 14)
- It was somewhat helpful because it gave me the confidence to go on raising issues. (Participant 7)

#### **5.1.19. Helpfulness of supplementary readings**

The CD-ROM for the online course had an index of supplementary readings to assist participants in understanding the policy development process. The questionnaire asked participants if they were able to access and read some of the supplementary readings on the CD-ROM. Secondly, the questionnaire asked participants who had accessed the supplementary readings to indicate if they found them useful or otherwise. Table 15 shows participants' responses.

**Table 15: Participants' responses regarding access to, and usefulness of, the supplementary readings on CD-ROM**

Accessibility of supplementary readings on the CD-ROM	Participants	Percentage
Yes	11	65%
No	4	24%
No response	2	11%
Total	17	100%
Usefulness of supplementary readings on the CD-ROM	Participants	Percentage
Useless	0	0%
Somewhat useful	4	24%
Very useful	7	41%
No response	6	35%
Total	17	100%

Table 15 shows that of the 17 participants, approximately two-thirds (65%) accessed and read some of the supplementary readings on the CD-ROM and found them very useful and enriching. The readings enabled the participants to be focused and to grasp concepts and issues. Four participants (24%) indicated that they did not access the supplementary readings. Two participants (11%) did not respond to this item. Slightly over one-third (35%) of the participants did not indicate whether they found the supplementary readings useful or not.

Participants who were unable to access the supplementary readings were asked to explain why. The main reasons provided by most participants were computer illiteracy and lack of time due to heavy workload.

- I do not know. I guess it was because of my computer illiteracy. (Participant 2)
- It was because I became extremely busy and I was out of the country for a while. I

could not settle down to work on my assignments. (Participant 3)

- The online course had not reached the stage where I had to read that much. (Participant 4)
- I just could not find time to do my assignments (Participant 10)
- I did not find time to read the supplementary resource readings. (Participant 11)

#### **5.1.20. Helpfulness of templates**

Apart from the introductory e-mails, participants had to complete one learning activity before the face-to-face workshop in Maputo. This activity involved a confidential memorandum from the minister of education outlining the vision for distance education. The participants were to reflect, using the template, on the minister's vision and share their reflections with colleagues through e-mail. The evaluator was interested in determining the number of participants who attempted and completed this activity. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether they were able to complete this activity before the face-to-face workshop in Maputo. In addition, the questionnaire asked them to indicate whether the template they used was helpful in completing the activity. Their responses are shown in Table 16.

**Table 16: Number of participants who completed the learning activity and found the template used for the activity helpful**

Participants who completed the activity	Number	Percentage
Completed activity	9	53%
Did not complete activity	5	29%
No response	3	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>
Helpfulness of the template for doing the activity	Number	Percentage
Very helpful	9	53%
Somewhat helpful	0	0%
Least helpful	0	0%
Not helpful	0	0%
No response	8	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to Table 16, slightly over half (53%) of the 17 participants completed the activity, compared to approximately one-third (29%) who did not complete it before the Maputo workshop. Three participants (18%) did not respond to this item. All nine participants (53%) who completed the activity found the template to be very useful.

#### **5.1.21. Helpfulness of comments on learning activity**

After each participant had e-mailed the learning activity to other participants, the recipients were expected to critique, discuss or make observations on it and send their comments by e-mail to all participants. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate the extent to which colleagues' and course facilitators' comments were helpful in clarifying certain issues associated with this activity. Table 17 shows the participants' responses to this item.

**Table 17: Usefulness of participants' and course facilitators' comments in clarifying issues associated with the first learning activity**

Helpfulness of colleagues' comments	Number	Percentage
Very helpful	9	53%
Somewhat helpful	0	0%
Least helpful	0	0%
Not helpful	0	0%
No response	8	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>
Helpfulness of facilitators' comments	Number	Percentage
Very helpful	1	6%
Somewhat helpful	4	24%
Least helpful	1	6%
Not helpful	0	0%
No response	11	64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 17 shows that all nine participants (53%) who received comments from other colleagues found them to be very helpful for clarifying certain issues associated with the activity as well as for indicating how other colleagues were thinking about the same issues. Participant 15 wrote, "The comments from the colleagues were very helpful to me. I was interested to get an indication of what other people thought should be happening in their countries regarding policy development process."

Regarding comments from course facilitators, six participants (36%) felt that the comments were helpful. However, one of the six participants felt that course facilitators' comments were least helpful to her. It should be noted that approximately two-thirds (64%) of the participants did not respond to this item. Part of the reason for the low response to this item was that some participants had not done the activity.



The objectives of the activity involving the confidential memorandum from the minister of education were:

- (i) To encourage participants to reflect on the aspects of the minister's vision and relate that vision to their own countries
- (ii) To give participants an understanding and appreciation of key issues on policy development
- (iii) To provide participants with an opportunity to share ideas with other colleagues taking the course on policy development issues
- (iv) To provide participants with an opportunity to know other colleagues and understand their countries

One way to assess if all these objectives were achieved was to ask participants themselves. Table 18 indicates participants' responses to this question.

**Table 18: Participants' responses regarding the achievement of learning activity objectives**

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	No response
Encouraged me to think about the aspects of a vision	9 (53%)	0 (0%)	8 (47%)
Encouraged me to relate the vision to my country	8 (47%)	1 (6%)	8 (47%)
Gave me an understanding and appreciation of key issues on policy development	7 (41%)	2 (12%)	8 (47%)
Provided me with an opportunity to share ideas with my colleagues on policy development	8 (47%)	1 (6%)	8 (47%)
Provided me with an opportunity to know my colleagues and understand their countries	7 (41%)	2 (12%)	8 (47%)

Table 18 shows that more than three-quarters of the nine participants who completed the activity were of the view that it did motivate them to reflect on the aspects of the minister's vision and relate it to their own countries. Second, it gave them an understanding and appreciation of key issues on policy development. Third, it provided them with an opportunity to share ideas with other colleagues taking the course on policy development issues, and lastly, it provided them with opportunities to know other colleagues and understand their countries.

### **5.1.22. Summary**

In summary, prior to the commencement of the online course, most participants were excited and anxious about it. However, after three weeks of participation, the level of anxiety of the majority of participants had declined because they had gained confidence in using the CD-ROM and computers. The level of knowledge and skills of the majority of participants regarding word processing, preparing and sending e-mail messages, browsing for information on the Internet and viewing the CD-ROM ranged from average to slightly above average. Most participants who had access to institutional computers did not share them with others at work. Only a few participants had access to both personal and institutional computers.

Second, although most participants had no idea of the computer models they were using for the online course, most computers had Internet connectivity and CD-ROM drives. Therefore, most participants had e-mail addresses, although the majority of them accessed the online course through the CD-ROM. Only one participant accessed the online course through the Internet only.

Third, most participants found the instructions on how to use e-mail very helpful, clear and straightforward. However, the majority of the participants had no idea what a browser was, except three who mentioned Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator. The participants who accessed the online course through the Internet complained of the slowness of their

computers in accessing the SAIDE Web site. Other participants had difficulty opening PDF files and sending file attachments through e-mail. One participant who used a Macintosh computer had difficulty in reading the CD-ROM. On the other hand, most participants accessed the supplementary readings on CD-ROM and found them very useful.

Fourth, most participants found the instructions on the CD about the purpose, content, structure, expected outcomes and mode of delivery of the online course very helpful. Likewise, most participants felt that facilitators' advice on the amount of time to be spent preparing and sending introductory e-mail and describing the two policies in their countries was very helpful. It enabled them to manage their time. Indeed, the majority of the participants succeeded in sending their first assignment. In addition, more than half of the participants completed the first learning activity before the Maputo workshop.

Lastly, the majority of the participants felt that the comments they received from colleagues and/or course facilitators were helpful, encouraging, supportive, constructive and confidence-building. Course facilitators' and other participants' comments clarified and indicated different perspectives on issues.

## **5.2.0. Findings on the one-week face-to-face workshop**

### **5.2.1. Introduction**

The second phase of the online course was a one-week face-to-face workshop that took place in Maputo, Mozambique, from October 1 to October 5, 2001. The main objective of the workshop was to create a forum for course participants and course facilitators to interact over the issues and components of policy development process. The SADC–Human Resource Development–Sector Coordinating Unit (SADC–HRD–SCU) in Swaziland organised and co-ordinated the workshop, in collaboration with the course facilitators from SAIDE, South Africa, and the members of the TCDE based in Mozambique.

Eighteen course participants attended the workshop, along with four course facilitators and the course evaluator. However, one participant, who was the local contact person, was unable to complete the evaluation questionnaire because he was in and out of the workshop. Another local participant was unable to complete the questionnaire because he joined the workshop two days after it had started. Thus, the findings in this section emanate from data provided by 16 participants instead of 18.

### 5.2.2. Clarity of objectives

One of the critical aspects of a workshop is that it must have clearly defined objectives. Therefore, the first question of the evaluation instrument for the Maputo face-to-face workshop solicited participants' perceptions of the extent to which the four facilitators clearly stated the objectives of the workshop. Table 19 summarises the participants' responses to this question.

**Table 19: Extent to which the objectives of the workshop were clearly stated by facilitators**

The objectives of the workshop were clearly stated	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	6	38%
Agree	8	50%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
No response	2	12%
Total	16	100%

Table 19 shows that most participants felt the facilitators clearly stated the objectives of the workshop. Of the 16 participants, 14 (88%) pointed out that the facilitators clearly stated the objectives of the workshop. Not one of the remaining participants indicated that facilitators failed to clearly state the objectives. Two participants (12%) did not respond. Thus, the conclusion is that course facilitators clearly stated the objectives of the workshop.

### 5.2.3. Participants' expectations

The questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether the workshop met their expectations. Table 20 indicates the participants' responses to this question.

**Table 20: Extent to which the workshop met participants' expectations**

Participants' expectations were:	Number	Percentage
Fully met	11	69%
Partially met	4	25%
Not met at all	1	6%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 20, most participants felt that the workshop fully met their expectations. Of the 16 participants, 11 (69%) indicated that their expectations of the workshop were fully met. Four participants (25%) pointed out that the workshop partially met their expectations. Only one participant (6%) felt that the workshop failed to meet expectations.

### 5.2.4. Physical conditions and logistical arrangement

The third question asked participants to indicate the extent to which the workshop's physical conditions and logistical arrangements were good. Table 21 shows the participants' responses to this question.

**Table 21: Extent to which workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were good**

Workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were:	Number	Percentage
Excellent	4	25%
Good	11	69%
Satisfactory	1	6%
Mediocre	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	16	100%

The majority of the participants felt that the workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were good. Of the 16 participants, 4 (25%) indicated that the workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were excellent, while 11 (69%) thought they were good. Only one participant felt they were satisfactory. None of the participants was of the view that the workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were mediocre or poor.

#### **5.2.5. Quality of content and facilitators’ presentations**

The fourth question asked participants to indicate the extent to which the quality of content and quality of the facilitators’ presentations at the workshop were good. Table 22 shows the participants’ responses.

**Table 22: Quality of the content and facilitators' presentation**

Quality and presentation of the content at the workshop were:	Number	Percentage
Excellent	8	50%
Good	7	44%
Satisfactory	1	6%
Mediocre	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 22, most participants were of the view that the quality of content and the quality of the facilitators' presentation at the workshop were quite good. Of the 16 people who participated in this workshop, eight (50%) felt that the quality of content and presentation was excellent. Seven participants (44%) were of the view that it was good and one (6%) indicated that it was satisfactory.

#### **5.2.6. Adequacy of time allocated to workshop activities**

During the workshop, participants had to undertake a variety of activities. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate if there was enough time allocated to the various workshop activities. Specifically, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: "The time provided for the various workshop activities was adequate." Table 23 shows participants' responses to this question.

**Table 23: Adequacy of time provided for the various workshop activities**

The time provided for the various workshop activities was adequate	Number	Percentage
Strongly agree	9	56%
Agree	6	38%
Disagree	1	6%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 23, the majority of the participants felt that the time allocated for the various workshop activities was adequate. Of the 16 participants who completed this questionnaire, 15 (94%) felt that the time allocated for the various workshop activities was adequate. Only one participant was of the view that it was inadequate.

#### **5.2.7. Participants' reasons for attending the workshop**

The questionnaire asked participants to indicate why they participated in the workshop. Specifically, it presented participants with three possible reasons for attending the workshop:

- (i) To improve performance in their current position
- (ii) To prepare themselves for new tasks or responsibilities
- (iii) To gain general information and knowledge

Participants were requested to indicate the reasons that were true in their case. The participants' responses are indicated in Table 24.



**Table 24: Participants' reasons for participating in the workshop**

The reasons for participating in the workshop were to:	Yes (%)	No (%)	No response
Improve my performance	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)
Prepare myself for new tasks	14 (88%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)
Gain general knowledge	13 (81%)	0 (0%)	3 (19%)

Table 24 indicates that the majority of the participants attended the workshop for all three reasons stated: to improve performance in their present position, to prepare themselves for new tasks or responsibilities and to gain general information and knowledge.

### 5.2.8. Quality of workshop handouts

The questionnaire asked participants to rate, using a scale of poor to excellent, the quality of materials (i.e., handouts, etc.) issued at the workshop by the facilitators. Table 25 indicates the participants' responses.

**Table 25: Extent to which teaching materials at the workshop were good**

The materials (i.e., handouts, etc.) for the workshop were:	Number	Percentage
Excellent	1	6%
Good	12	75%
Satisfactory	2	13%
Mediocre	1	6%
Poor	0	0%
Total	16	100%

Overall, participants felt that the quality of the handouts was good. For example, of the 16 participants, one (6%) indicated that the quality of the handouts was excellent. Twelve (75%) participants indicated that it was good, and two participants (13%) indicated that it was satisfactory. Only one (6%) felt that the handouts were mediocre.

### 5.2.9. Quality of audiovisuals

The facilitators also used audiovisual material to make their presentations at the workshop. The questionnaire asked participants to rate, using a scale of poor to excellent, the quality of the audiovisuals. Table 26 indicates participants' responses.

**Table 26: Extent to which audiovisuals used at the workshop were good**

The workshop audiovisuals were:	Number	Percentage
Excellent	8	50%
Good	5	31%
Satisfactory	3	19%
Mediocre	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Total	16	100%

Overall, most participants felt that the quality of the audiovisuals used in the workshop was good. Of the 16 participants who responded to this question, eight (50%) indicated that the audiovisuals were excellent, five (31%) felt they were good and three (19%) were of the view that they were satisfactory. None of the participants rated the audiovisuals as mediocre or poor.

### 5.2.10. Pace of facilitators' presentations

The questionnaire asked participants to express their opinion regarding how well facilitators paced their presentations at the workshop. Specifically, the questionnaire asked them whether the pace of the facilitators' presentation was too fast, satisfactory or too slow. Table 27 shows participants' responses.

**Table 27: Pace of the facilitators' presentation**

The pace of the facilitators' presentation was:	Number	Percentage
Too fast	1	6%
Satisfactory	15	94%
Too slow	0	0%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 27, the pace of the facilitators' presentations was satisfactory, neither too fast nor too slow. Of the 16 participants who responded to this question, 15 (94%) were of the opinion that the pace of the facilitators' presentation was satisfactory. Only one (6%) felt that the pace of the facilitators' presentation was too fast.

#### **5.2.11. Depth of activities**

The questionnaire asked participants to indicate their views regarding the extent to which the workshop activities were demanding. Table 28 indicates participants' responses to this question.

**Table 28: Extent to which workshop activities were demanding**

The workshop activities were:	Number	Percentage
Very demanding	0	0%
Demanding	3	19%
Somewhat demanding	12	75%
Light	1	6%
Very light	0	0%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 28, most participants were of the view that the workshop activities were reasonable, that is, they were neither very demanding nor very light. Of the 16 participants who responded to this question, three-quarters (75%) were of the view that the workshop

activities were reasonably demanding. Three participants (19%) were of the view that the workshop activities were demanding. One participant felt that the workshop activities were light.

### 5.2.12. Adequacy of time allocated for discussions

A training workshop should provide an opportunity for participants to participate actively in the workshop through discussions. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate if they felt the facilitators provided adequate time for active participation and discussions. The responses of the participants are shown in Table 29.

**Table 29: Provision of time for participants to actively discuss and participate in the workshop**

Occasions for participants to actively discuss and participate were:	Number	Percentage
Excessive	3	19%
Sufficient	12	75%
Insufficient	1	6%
Total	16	100%

Of the 16 participants who responded to this question, three-quarters (75%) were of the view that the time provided by facilitators for active participation and discussions was sufficient. Only three participants (19%) thought the facilitators provided excessive time, while one participant (6%) felt that it was insufficient for active participation and discussions.

### 5.2.13. Adequacy of practical activities

The training workshop in Maputo was interspersed with practical activities such as demonstrations and group hands-on activities. The questionnaire asked participants to

indicate the adequacy of practical and group activities. The responses of the participants are shown in Table 30.

**Table 30: Adequacy of the practical activities at the workshop**

The number of practical activities at the workshop was:	Number	Percentage
Excessive	1	6%
Sufficient	15	94%
Insufficient	0	0%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 30, a significant majority of the participants — 15 (94%) — were of the view that the number of practical and group activities at the workshop was sufficient. Only one participant (6%) responded that the practical and group activities were excessive. None of the participants indicated that there were insufficient practical and group activities at the workshop.

#### **5.2.14. Duration of the workshop**

The duration of a workshop should not be too short or too long. If it is too short, facilitators tend to leave less time for participants' engagement in group activities and critical reflection. In addition, it tends not to be cost-effective. If it is too long, participants tend to lose steam and concentration. Subsequently, the questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether the length of the Maputo workshop was adequate, that is, whether it was excessive, sufficient or insufficient. Table 31 indicates participants' responses.

**Table 31: Adequacy of the duration of the workshop**

The length of the workshop was:	Number	Percentage
Excessive	0	0%
Sufficient	15	94%
Insufficient	1	6%
Total	16	100%

According to Table 31, of the 16 participants who responded to this question, 15 (94%) were of the view that the Maputo workshop was sufficient. Only one participant (6%) was of the view that the Maputo workshop was insufficient. None of the participants felt that the duration of the Maputo workshop was excessive.

#### **5.2.15. Open-ended questions**

The evaluation questionnaire had four open-ended questions that asked participants for the following feedback:

- (i) To point out the components of the workshop that they found to be most valuable
- (ii) To point out the components of the workshop that they found to be least valuable and why
- (iii) To suggest ways to improve the aspects of the workshop that were not adequately prepared and executed
- (iv) To provide general comments on any aspect of the workshop

In response to the first open-ended question, participants said the components of the Maputo workshop they found to be most valuable included learning about the process of developing a vision and a policy framework, learning to recognise characteristics of a good vision, learning to develop guidelines for formulating a good policy and learning about financial planning. Other components of the Maputo workshop participants found to be

valuable included the sessions with group work activities, exercises on policy formulation and the development process, the video linking vision to policy development, and the exercise about the process of designing and evaluating a framework for an ODL programme. Participants were particularly pleased with the varied approaches facilitators used to run the workshop and the fact that they recognised participants' prior learning experiences.

Below are participants' statements, quoted verbatim, concerning the components of the Maputo workshop that they regarded to be most valuable:

- To me everything was valuable. (Participant 1)
- All components were valuable and relevant to me. (Participant 7)
- The formation of a policy, and the financial planning session, though the time was limited for the latter, were valuable to me. (Participant 1)
- The process of developing vision and policy frameworks. (Participant 3)
- The group activities and subsequent sharing in the plenary sessions; the inputs by resource persons during group activities; the varied approaches used; ecognition of participants' prior experiences were valuable to me. (Participant 4)
- The exercise on policy formulation and the practical work reflecting policy formulation were most valuable to me. (Participant 6)
- The most valuable components were the development of the vision and the policy framework. (Participant 7)
- The policy design and framework, the formulation of a vision and discussions that followed thereafter were most valuable to me. (Participant 8)
- Policy formulation process, starting with creation of a vision and leading on to the framework and its evaluation were valuable to me. (Participant 9)
- Writing/having a clear vision and policy development and development of ramework for ODL programmes were most valuable to me. (Participant 11)

- Exercise on policy development; developing a framework and vision; the video was great. (Participant 12)
- Given that this was more of learning and sharing experience, I found all the components addressed to be very important. (Participant 15)
- Group work, especially when developing a policy framework, was most valuable. It allowed all the participants to think. (Participant 13)
- Vision and how it links with policy development, development of a policy framework from vision, creative thinking were valuable to me. (Participant 14)
- The actual process of designing and evaluating a framework for an ODL programme was most valuable to me. (Participant 15)
- How to come up with policy guidelines; vision and the characteristics of a good vision were valuable to me. (Participant 16)

The second open-ended question asked participants to indicate the components of the workshop that they found to be less valuable and to explain why. Overall, most of the participants felt that the Maputo workshop was valuable for them. Only three participants indicated that the component on budgeting for ODL was not adequately covered. They wished more time could have been spent on it because it was very important as well. The following comments reflect the views of the participants.

- The budgeting session was too brief for us; more time should have been provided for it. (Participant 8)
- Financial planning, there was too much material, it needed rounding up. (Participant 12)
- The session on budgeting was hurried through. We should have been allowed to budget for the policy framework. (Participant 13)

Only one participant expressed discontent with the way course facilitators handled the content of the workshop. Apparently this participant expected the facilitators to follow the conventional process of presenting the content on the policy development process in



workshops (i.e., in formal presentations followed by panel or group discussions). “It is not so much that the components were less valuable than the fact that the workshop content did not emphasise the policy development process as per my expectations (i.e., I expected to learn the *process* of policy development, approaches, mechanisms for ensuring successful implementation of policy” (Participant 10).

The third open-ended question asked participants to suggest strategies that can be applied to improve the components of the workshop that were found to be inadequate. One participant felt that the component on vision and preparing a policy framework for HIV/AIDS was rather “too long and especially given that it was not directly dealing with policy” (Participant 10). This participant recommended that this activity should be reduced to one day instead of two days.

Another participant was of the view that there was not enough linkage between the online course activities and the face-to-face activities. He recommended that facilitators should try to make these linkages between the online activities and the face-to-face activities so that there was continuity. “Although related to the online course, perhaps more integration is needed, i.e., there should be a link between online activities and the face-to-face workshop activities. This linkage should be strengthened” (Participant 3).

One participant felt that the programme was overloaded so that the financial component was not adequately covered. This participant recommended that “care should be taken not to overload the programme so that important components such as financial implications would not be adequately covered” (Participant 7). This sentiment was supported by another participant who recommended that organisers needed to “re-adjust the time frame for some components, for example, more time needs to be allocated to the financial planning component” (Participant 11).

One participant felt that some facilitators tended to talk too much on some topics so that more time was spent on them than on others. Therefore, this participant recommended that

facilitators should “avoid talking too much on some topics. Let the participants make more contribution” (Participant 12).

The final open-ended question gave participants an opportunity to write general comments, observations and other recommendations:

- The programme for the face-to-face workshop should be circulated in advance to enable the participants to focus. (Participant 14)
- Time for participation prior to the workshop should be increased. (Participant 15)
- There is need for another face-to-face workshop as a wrap-up to the whole course so that it helps those of us that are likely to experience technical difficulties, e.g., e-mails. (Participant 16)
- Since I don't have access to an e-mail facility, it would assist me to have printed material together with the CD. (Participant 1)
- Generally, the spirit in which the workshop was conducted was exceptionally good. Participant 3)
- The course has come at a very critical time when most SADC governments realise the need to embrace distance education as an equal partner in the provision of education and training and are, therefore, in the process of trying to formulate policy for distance education. (Participant 4)
- This course is very relevant to the kind of work I am doing at the Zimbabwe Open University. It has equipped me with ideas, which I will also share with my colleagues back home. I am now a better policy formulator than I was before. (Participant 6)
- I think this workshop was well organised. Its success lies in the quality of participants who all had interest in the field and were implementers. (Participant 7)
- The time between activities should be increased to accommodate time constraints that we face at work. (Participant 8)

- Participants should now be in a good position to review whatever policies on ODL in their respective countries and to come up with new ones. (Participant 9)
- The workshopping style excessively relied on group work by participants. In my view, a balance should have been made to get more input from the facilitators. (Participant 10)
- The facilitators were warm and very efficient. The approaches/methods adopted for the workshop were participative and very appropriate. (Participant 11)
- The evaluator should separate questions (i.e., “The course content and its presentation”) so that participants could respond as they please for the “content” and “presentation” components. (Participant 14)
- The facilitators were excellent; they were well versed in the content and very well organized. (Participant 15)
- On the whole, this has been a very good opportunity to learn and internalise aspects of good policy development and management. (Participant 16)

#### **5.2.16. Summary**

In summary, most participants were of the view that facilitators clearly stated the objectives of the workshop. According to the participants, the quality of the content and the extent to which facilitators presented it at the workshop were quite good. The workshop’s physical conditions and logistical arrangements were also good, and the workshop activities met participants’ expectations. Most participants attended the workshop for three reasons: to improve their performance at the workplace, to prepare themselves for new tasks or responsibilities and to gain general information and knowledge.

Second, most participants felt that the time allocated for the various workshop activities was adequate. Only one participant indicated that it was inadequate. Most participants felt that the quality of the handouts and audiovisuals was good. Only one participant felt that the handouts were mediocre. Most participants felt that the pace of facilitators’ presentation was satisfactory — neither too fast nor too slow. Only one participant felt that the pace of the facilitators’ presentation was too fast.

Third, most participants were of the view that the workshop activities were reasonable, that is, they were neither very demanding nor very light. Only one participant felt that the workshop activities were light. The majority of the participants felt that the time provided by facilitators for active participation, practical activities and group discussions was sufficient. One participant felt that there was insufficient time for active participation and discussions. Another participant felt that practical and group activities were excessive. Most of the participants were of the view that the duration of the Maputo workshop was sufficient.

The first set of aspects of the Maputo workshop that were perceived by the majority of participants to be most valuable included learning about the process of developing a vision and policy framework, learning to recognise the characteristics of a good vision, learning to develop guidelines for formulating a good policy and learning about financial planning. The second set of aspects of the Maputo workshop that were perceived by most participants to be most valuable were group activities, critical reflections and the inputs of resource persons. The third set of aspects of the Maputo workshop that were perceived by most participants to be most valuable included the activity on policy formulation and development, the video linking vision to policy development. The last set of aspects of the Maputo workshop that were perceived by most participants to be most valuable included the activity on designing and evaluating policy framework for ODL programme, the use of different approaches to run the workshop and the recognition of participants' prior experiences.

On the other hand, three participants felt that the workshop session on budgeting for an ODL programme was inadequately covered. They recommended that in future more time should be spent on it because it was very important. Only one participant expressed discontent with the way course facilitators handled the content of the workshop. Apparently, this participant expected the facilitators to follow the conventional process of presenting the content on policy development. Another participant felt that the component on vision and

preparing a policy framework for HIV/AIDS was rather “too long in view of the fact that it was not directly dealing with policy.” He suggested that in future this activity should be reduced to one day instead of two.

### **5.3.0. Findings: After the Maputo workshop**

#### **5.3.1. Introduction**

At the end of the online course, the course evaluator prepared and e-mailed a summative evaluation questionnaire to all participants to complete. The purpose of this phase of evaluation was to determine:

- (i) The extent to which participants acquired knowledge on policy development for distance education and integrated it with their work experience
- (ii) The level of interaction among participants and course facilitators through e-mails
- (iii) The overall potential of the online course to meet their work-related needs
- (iv) The general level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the online course
- (v) Participants’ overall opinions and views regarding the course content, course facilitators’ role, value of online learning activities and discussions
- (vi) Participants’ response to the overall course delivery format, the quality of required readings and the extent to which their expectations were met

Specifically, the questionnaire asked participants to rate items on a six-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from “very poor” (score of 1) to “excellent” (score of 6). The other point scales — very good, good, fair, poor and very poor — were scored 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. For interpretation purposes, the evaluator computed mean scores for each of the 20 items in Table 32 and then used the following range of scores to interpret the mean scores.

0.01 - 1.99	= Poor
2.00 - 2.99	= Fair
3.00 - 3.99	= Good
4.00 +	= Very Good

Since this questionnaire was distributed at the end of the course and quite a number of participants had dropped out of the course, the response rate was poor despite several reminders. Hence, out of 18 participants who should have responded to this questionnaire, only about a third (five) eventually responded. In view of the size of the population and the actual number of participants who responded, the findings of this section are not representative of the views and opinions of the course participants. Therefore, the results of this section should be interpreted with caution. The results of the analysis are indicated in Table 32.

**Table 32: Participants' overall opinions and views on selected aspects of the online course**

My view of the online course is that	EX (6)	VG (5)	GD (4)	FR (3)	PR (2)	VP (1)	MS
1. The course content was:	1	1	2	1			3.7
2. The course as a whole was:		3	1				3.2
3. The intellectual challenge I got in the online course was:	1	1	2				3.2
4. The facilitator's contribution to my learning was:		1	3				2.8
5. The quality of the facilitator's feedback was:	1	1	2				3.2
6. Interaction with the course facilitator through the e-mail was:		2		1	1		2.5
7. The facilitator's feedback to my online learning activities was:		3	1				3.2
8. The facilitator's encouragement to enable me to go on with the course was:	1		3	1			3.2
9. The facilitator, as a discussion moderator/facilitator, was:	1	2	1				3.3
10. The facilitator's handouts at the face-to-face workshop in Maputo were:	1	2	1	1			3.8
11. Interaction with other colleagues through e-mail was:			1	3	1		2.5
12. Colleagues' critiques of my online learning activities were:			1	2	1		1.8
13. The group's online discussions on policy development were:		1	1	1	1		2.3
14. The overall course delivery format (i.e., online and face-to-face) was:	1	2	2				4.0
15. The required readings of the online course in the CD (i.e., articles, texts, etc.) were:		3	1	1			3.7
16. The assigned learning activities and assignments given to learners were:		2	2	1			3.5
17. Providing us with opportunities to practise what we had learnt in the course was:		2	1	1			2.8
18. Acquisition of knowledge on policy development for distance education was:		2	2	1			3.5
19. Integration of acquired knowledge on policy development with my work experience was:			2	1	1		2.2
20. The overall potential of the online course to meet my work-related needs was:			2	1	2		2.5

	VD (1)	SD (2)	D (3)	S (4)	SS (5)	VS (6)	MS
21. Level of satisfaction / dissatisfaction with the online course				2	2	1	4.0

KEY: EX= Excellent; VG=Very Good; GD= Good; FR=Fair; PR=Poor; VP=Very Poor; MS=Mean Score; VD=Very Dissatisfied; SD=Somewhat Dissatisfied; D=Dissatisfied; S=Satisfied; SS=Somewhat Satisfied; VS=Very Satisfied

### 5.3.2. Results

Overall, the five participants were of the view that aspects of the online course listed in Table 32 were either fair or good, and they were satisfied with them. Of the 21 items in Table 32, and using the interpretation scale described above, slightly more than half (52%) of the items were rated as good, and one-third (33%) of the items were rated as fair.

The only aspect of this course that was poorly executed, according to Table 32, was interaction with other colleagues through e-mail (Item 11). The mean score of this statement was 1.8. In other words, the online interactions and discussions among participants on completed assigned activities were not according to expectations.

The five participants' view was that the course content, the course as a whole, the facilitators' role, the handouts at the workshop, the supplementary readings, the assigned activities and the course delivery format (i.e., online and face-to-face workshop) were the critical features that made the online course a success. In addition, the participants were very much satisfied with the online course and it did meet their expectations. The mean score of the item on course satisfaction was 4.0. One participant remarked, "This is an excellent course and it really paved the way for more people to participate in it. Also, for someone involved in ODL, this course was really an eye-opener in terms of what is possible and what is required for successful delivery" (Participant 3).

Section two of the questionnaire had open-ended questions. One of the open-ended questions asked participants to indicate the aspects of the online course that contributed most or least to their learning. The aspects of the online course that participants felt contributed most to their learning were the introductory activity for "breaking the ice," the introductory activity on successful and unsuccessful policy, the face-to-face workshop in Maputo, the way the course was designed, the challenging nature of the course, the support provided by facilitators and the quality of the reading materials on CD-ROM.

- The first activity which I managed to do was enriching. (Participant 1)
- To me the face-to-face session in Maputo contributed most. (Participant 2)
- The actual design of the course, as well as the challenging nature of support provided by the facilitators contributed most to me. (Participant 3)
- The reading materials were very rich and informative. (Participant 4)



The aspects of the online course that two participants felt contributed least to their learning were one participant's failure to send e-mails, which kept on bouncing back, and the lack of online interaction among participants.

- With the online course, I could not get time to send them, my submissions kept on bouncing back. At the end I gave up. (Participant 2)
- Interaction with other participants. (Participant 3)

### **5.3.3. Continuity of the online course**

The second open-ended question asked participants to comment on the online course delivery strategy and the face-to-face interaction, particularly whether they should be continued or discontinued. The feeling of the participants was that the two modes of course delivery should be continued because they complemented each other. The face-to-face aspect was critically important to the successful delivery of the course because it consolidated issues and helped participants better understand policy development processes.

- This is additional learning experiences for distance education practitioners and knowledge enrichment to the SADC region. (Participant 1)
- The methods complement each other. (Participant 2)
- It works very well. The face-to-face session is important to consolidate issues and to develop a better understanding of policy issues and processes. (Participant 4)
- I believe it is critical to the successful delivery of the course. (Participant 3)
- It is convenient, flexible and fun. (Participant 5)

### **5.3.4. Areas of improvement**

The final open-ended question asked participants to recommend those aspects of the course that needed improvement. They provided the following six recommendations:

- (i) The topic on financial management should be given more time and attention. The participants felt that this topic did not receive adequate time and attention at the Maputo workshop.
- (ii) In future, people enrolling for this course should be computer literate and have access to Internet and computer facilities.
- (iii) Participants who failed to complete pre-workshop activities should not be allowed to attend the face-to-face workshop. In other words, the pre-condition for attending the face-to-face workshop should be completion of pre-workshop activities.
- (iv) Course facilitators should regularly check to see if participants' progress is in accordance with the objectives of the online course.
- (v) Participants who have no access to computers and Internet/e-mail facilities should be provided with printed materials.
- (vi) The course should be offered between June and August, not towards the end of the year when everyone seems to be very busy trying to meet deadlines at the workplace.

Below are participants' verbatim responses:

- The financial management topic should be given more time, especially on the face-to-face mode. (Participant 1)
- People enrolling for this course should be computer literate. (Participant 2)
- Access to Internet and e-mail facilities is vital. The course cannot work well without these basic requirements. Also, I think a lot of money was spent on the face-to-face intervention, yet many participants never submitted any pre-workshop work. People should not be allowed to attend the workshop if they did not complete all pre-workshop activities. (Participant 3)
- It is always important to regularly check if one is doing things according to set objectives in order to ensure that one is still on-track. Also, in the course design and planning, the involvement of the beneficiaries/target group is crucial. (Participant 4)

- The course should have printed materials to cater for the participants who have no access to the computer and the Internet. (Participant 1)
- Maybe the course should be offered between June and August, not towards the end of the year because during that time everybody is trying to meet deadlines at the workplace. (Participant 2)

## **6.0. Chapter Six: Observations, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The evaluator was contracted to determine whether the online or face-to-face course components met course participants' needs and increased their understanding and knowledge of policy development processes, and to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery strategies. In addition, the course evaluator was asked to look at the management process of the online course including online discussions, design and development of online course materials, the user-friendliness of the online system, the worthiness of the different types of support systems, and participants' views on aspects of the online course. Below is a summary of the course evaluator's observations, conclusions and recommendations.

### **6.2. Course management**

The online course was well conceived and managed. Its conception and broad aspects of its content were not only a product of the course designers and developers, but also of the consumers — i.e., the Technical Committee on Distance Education (TCDE) together with one of the course facilitators. As noted previously, it was the TCDE that conceived and outlined the broad aspects of the online course, including its objectives. The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) offered to finance the course and contracted the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) to design, develop and offer it online. Thus, course participants, through the TCDE, had ownership of this course.

Contracting SAIDE to design, develop and provide the online course was a good choice. SAIDE is a reputable and well-known distance education centre in Southern Africa. The online course could not have found a better place to be designed, developed and co-ordinated. SAIDE has the reputation, capacity and technical know-how in course design, development, co-ordination and offering online courses. SAIDE was also extremely careful in identifying reputable distance education experts in the SADC region to contribute to the design and development of the course content and assist in the facilitation of both the online course and the workshop. The distance education experts are well known and respected in the SADC region.

The process of inviting course participants followed the SADC protocol. The SADC Human Resource Unit in Swaziland, rather than SAIDE, invited member states to nominate and submit names of course participants. The invitation clearly stipulated the nature of the online course, how it would be offered and the category of participants that should be nominated to the course. SAIDE communicated with participants after the SADC Human Resource Unit compiled the list of participants. Also, SAIDE advised participants ahead of time that in order to access and fully benefit from the online course they should have access to computers with Internet connectivity and/or CD-ROM drives. The course was launched on the SAIDE Web site and also packaged in CD-ROM format. Before launching the course, SAIDE dispatched CDs to all participants and course facilitators. Thus, all participants received the CD-ROM format on time. This was good course management on the part of SAIDE.

The idea of launching the course on the SAIDE Web site as well as making it available in CD-ROM format was plausible and commendable for several reasons. First, although quite a number of participants did have computers with CD-ROM drives and Internet connectivity, others had computers with CD-ROM drives only or with Internet connectivity only. These latter participants could not have accessed the online course if it was only available at the SAIDE Web site or only available on CD-ROM. It is in this regard that one

would like to commend SAIDE for making the course accessible both through the SAIDE Web site and on CD-ROM. In this way, most participants were catered for except for one or two who had no access to computers. Inevitably, participants who had no access to computers had serious limitations because they could not access the course at the SAIDE Web site, or use the CD or interact with other participants and course facilitators online. Some of the participants who did not have Internet connectivity tried to improvise by composing their responses on diskettes and using colleagues' computers that had Internet connectivity to receive and send responses using e-mail. This was an excellent effort on the part of these participants.

Some of the participants who had serious difficulty in this course were those who were completely computer illiterate, had never touched a keyboard before and had no prior knowledge or experience of accessing a computer. Inevitably, such participants were among those who could not complete the online course. However, they attended the Maputo face-to-face workshop and certainly benefited from it. In contrast, most of the participants who completed the online course had knowledge of or experience using computers and e-mails prior to the online course, had unlimited access to computers with CD-ROM drives and Internet connectivity, and knew how to use the e-mail facility.

In view of the above, it is recommended that all participants who enrol in this course in future should have rudimentary or basic computing knowledge and/or skills (computer literacy); should have adequate access to a computer with both Internet connectivity and a CD-ROM drive; and should be willing to invest or set aside quality time for the online course. Indeed, informal interviews with some participants at the Maputo workshop revealed that they had never touched a computer keyboard in their lives, had never held a mouse and had never sent and received e-mails. It is therefore not surprising that after the Maputo workshop they faded away.

The SADC-TCDE may wish to commission a survey study within the SADC region to establish the level of computer literacy, Internet connectivity and access to computers with Internet connectivity and CD-ROM drives. The results of such a study could indicate the magnitude of the problem and point towards the action that needs to be taken to resolve it. Some donors, including COL, may wish to fund such a study. Also, it might be a good idea, in addition to providing the online course through the Internet and/or CD-ROM, to consider providing the course through print media to cater to those participants who are computer illiterate, have no Internet connectivity and/or lack computers with CD-ROM drives.

### **6.3. Quality of course content**

In terms of content, the online course covered the breadth and depth of the policy development process and other aspects of open and distance learning. It drew, for example, from a wide range of broad subject areas such as policy development, open and distance learning, designing distance education programmes and courses, learner support systems, use of media and technology, and planning and managing distance education. In the area of policy development it included information on processes of policy development with a particular focus on national policies, guidelines on what national policies should seek to cover, strategies for conducting relevant policy research and understanding policy implementation contexts, formats for national policy presentation, and relevant policy development tools. The content on the policy development process was of good quality. It is recommended that it be retained.

### **6.4. Accessing the online course**

Most participants found it easier and faster to access the course, supplementary readings and portable document format (PDF) files on the CD-ROM rather than through the SAIDE Web site. Indeed, most participants conceded that accessing the online course at the SAIDE Web site was time-consuming, either because there was too much traffic (information overload), limited bandwidth and/or low computer RAM. In addition, some

participants seemed to have difficulty downloading the Adobe Acrobat Reader. Participants preferred to use the Internet for sending e-mails and completed activities.

One can, with some degree of confidence, conclude that launching the online course on the SAIDE Web site as well as providing it on CD-ROM was a wise decision. Therefore, it is recommended that the online course be provided online as well as on CD-ROM, especially considering the fact that some computers in this part of the world are more likely to have low RAM and therefore to have trouble accessing a Web site. In fact, in the case of this course, if all participants had computers with CD-ROM drives there probably would have been less need to launch the course online on the SAIDE Web site.

### **6.5. Online interactions and discussions**

It is reasonable to conclude that participants did not make full use of online discussions, despite facilitators' efforts and encouragements such as the following:

We hope that you have found it easy to use e-mail to communicate with fellow learners in this way. If you have had any problems, please feel free to contact your facilitator at any time to discuss them. Your facilitator will also telephone you periodically to confirm that everything is going well.

I hope you have been able to find your way around the CD by now, and are finding it easy to use. I am a little concerned that only a few people have currently completed the introductory activity, where we introduce ourselves to each other. I hope you all received the introductions that people have sent. To speed the process up a little, I thought I should provide a list of everyone on this e-mail group, so that you can get a sense of who you are sharing with. I would also like to encourage you to please send through your introductions as soon as possible, as we really need to get going with the main activities of the course.

Analysis of e-mail responses indicated that only a handful of the participants did engage in the online discussions and tried to raise issues. Most participants seemed to be content with just completing the assigned activities and e-mailing them to colleagues — as if they

were handing in an assignment for marking and expecting a grade at the end. Yet, as the course facilitators kept on emphasising, the major learning aspect of the course was engaging in the online discussions and debates on issues raised by colleagues on completed activities. Some participants “killed” the discussions by not responding to the probing questions directed to them. Perhaps the less-than-expected engagement in online discussions can be attributed to some participants’ lack of access to computers, and lack of literacy skills and work overload for others.

For example, one would imagine that it must have been cumbersome for some participants who had no Internet connectivity to receive and send e-mails as expediently as possible. They had to transfer information to diskettes and then scout for a computer with Internet connectivity. It must have been worse for participants who had never used a computer before. These participants had to ask friends who were computer literate to read, compose and send e-mails on their behalf. Not surprisingly, these were the participants who could not finish the course. It is recommended that in future, once an issue is raised in the online discussion, an attempt should be made to ensure that it is followed through and exhausted.

#### **6.6. User-friendliness of the online course**

Generally, the online system was very user-friendly. The layout was simple and easy to follow. The hyperlinks were clear, very directive, simplified and easy for participants to follow. For instance, the home page outlined the course structure succinctly. Its contents included the introduction, pre-workshop activities, workshop preparation, post-workshop activities and index of resources. The presence of the “Forward” and “Back” buttons ensured that participants did not get lost or run into a dead end.

The course structure was set out in a well-defined site map. This made it very easy for course participants to understand the structure and sequence of topics in the course. Every page had a menu at the top with various hyperlinks. The hyperlink buttons at the top of the



frame were “Home Page,” “Courses,” “Resources,” “Search,” “Facilitator” and “Group.” The hyperlink buttons on the left-hand side of the frame outlined the course structure and included “Purpose,” “Course Outcomes,” “Help,” “Introductory Activity” and “The Four Activities.”

The tutorial lessons on the CD-ROM were well written, very user-friendly and easy to follow. The online course was designed in a way that allowed participants to work through activities at their own pace, while having the benefit of interacting with peers and facilitators. However, for novice participants who were computer illiterate, had never touched a keyboard before, were intimidated by the technology and had little time to invest in these lessons due to other work-related activities, the online course seemed a little difficult. In light of this observation, it is strongly recommended that all course participants nominated for the online course must have at least some rudimentary computer literacy skills. This should be one of the mandatory criteria for participating in this course. Alternatively, an online course on computer literacy ought to be considered for those participants who, because of their work positions, have been selected by their governments to undertake this course but are indeed computer illiterate.

### **6.7. Quality of the learning activities**

An analysis of the content of the learning activities revealed that they were carefully designed and developed to meet the objectives of the course. The activities built on each other like a spiral or a coil spring. Activity 4 (developing a policy framework for HIV/AIDS in distance education) was built on Activity 3 (using policy to develop a better distance education policy). Activity 3 was built on Activity 2 (planning a policy process). Activity 2 was built on Activity 1 (responding to a memo from the minister of education). Thus, there was a linear connection between the activities, leading to a spiral learning process on policy development.

The learning activities were challenging, stimulating and relevant to the social context and work environment of participants in the SADC region. The activities tapped into, enhanced and built on participants' work experience. At the same time they depicted real-life situations. The questions raised in the activities required careful articulation and reflective and critical thinking from participants. They were further enhanced by probing questions from the course facilitators and the few participants who commented on other participants' completed activities. Below is an example of probing questions that the course facilitator wanted the participant to ponder:

Why did other people respond the way they did? Whether or not you agreed with their responses, what was good about their inputs? Where you did not agree, was it because their ideas were unsuitable in your country?

Furthermore, for each activity there was a prepared template participants could use to write responses. This was an excellent idea because it helped participants to focus on their responses and answer all questions. It is recommended that the use of assigned learning activities as well as templates for writing responses be retained.

Second, it is recommended that course facilitators should consider the possibility of developing more learning activities with a view to increasing and enhancing the quality and relevance of the online course. This objective can be achieved by inviting participants who successfully completed the course to develop such learning activities based on their experiences while completing their activity on country policies on open and distance learning. Such learning activities will not only be relevant to the SADC region, but will also depict real life cases in the region.

Third, it is recommended that course facilitators and participants should ensure that issues raised by colleagues' submissions are responded to rather than ignored. This will enrich the quality of online discussions and of reflective and critical learning. As indicated in the preceding sections of this report, although course facilitators and a few participants raised

interesting issues from assigned learning activities, these were sometimes not responded to by the actual authors of the assignments. Below are some of the issues raised by the course facilitators pertaining to the learning activities submitted by participants:

- It is also interesting that ... notes the absence of policy on open and distance learning in Namibia. What is the situation for other people? Is it the same? Do you think you need such policies?
- This activity creates an imaginary situation involving your minister of education. When you respond, maybe you could think specifically about the differences between “frameworks,” “guidelines,” and “implementation strategies.” Which of these would make sense given the minister’s requests? Why?
- I am also interested to see your reservations about “foreign” materials. I have done costing exercises before and often (not always) discovered that it is cheaper to get good support internationally (if necessary) for developing local materials than buying expensive materials from the developed world.
- Others, how does all of this relate to your experience? What are your views on ...’s proposal approach? Let me also take a devil’s advocate stand ..., do you think ...’s approach offers opportunities for regional co-operation in terms of the ideas you put forward?

The above reactions were not picked up and followed through to a logical conclusion, yet some of them were critically relevant in the context of the region. Only one participant tried to respond to the course facilitator’s question on the issue of sourcing “foreign” distance learning materials. This comment does not in any way imply that this was a general trend throughout the course. Certainly, it was not. Some participants with access to computers and Internet connectivity did engage in quality discussions and did respond to some issues raised by their colleagues and/or course facilitators. Most of these participants are the ones who completed the course and benefited from it. It is, therefore, recommended that course facilitators and course participants should strive to follow up on issues that are raised during discussions.

## 6.8. Success of the online course

The concept of *efficiency* refers to the ability to work well and without wasting time or resources. In the context of the online course, cost-efficiency would, therefore, imply the extent to which time and money budgeted for this course were used for the intended purpose.

The concept of *effective* implies that the desired impact or expected outcome of an event was achieved. In the context of the online course, cost-effectiveness would imply the extent to which money used to fund this course had the desired impact or expected outcomes.

Although these concepts imply different things, they are not mutually exclusive. In the context of the online course, two questions arise. The first one is, to what extent was the money budgeted for the online course used efficiently? The second question is, to what extent did the money budgeted for the online course produce the desired impact or expected outcomes? Phrased differently, was the online course successful in meeting the intended objectives? Was it a success?

Regarding the first question, the course evaluator was unfortunately unable to look at the financial records of the managers of the online course due to time constraints. Regarding the second question, and judging by the completion rate, the quality of the online discussions and the amount of knowledge and skills participants learned, including those who dropped out after the Maputo workshop, it can be concluded, with some degree of confidence, that the online course was a success and met its intended outcomes.

At the time of compiling this report, for example, out of 18 participants who registered for this course, nine (50%) had completed the course. Of the 18 participants, four had no access to computers and two were computer illiterate. If four participants had no access to, or had difficulty in accessing computers and were computer illiterate, it can be argued that the completion rate then was approximately two-thirds (64%). This rate is likely to increase

because at the time of compiling this report, a few participants were expected to submit the last learning activity. In fact, the completion rate could have been higher had the nomination and selection criteria allowed only participants who were computer literate and had access to computers with Internet connectivity and CD-ROM drives.

That participants did acquire knowledge and skills in online learning and the dimensions of the policy development process was evident in the quality of the learning activities shared through the e-mails. An analysis of the submitted learning activities and reflective comments showed participants' high level of understanding and articulation of the key dimensions of policy development processes. This was shown clearly in the participants' submissions on their countries' policy framework for open and distance learning. The submissions demonstrated that participants had clear understanding and articulation of the stages of policy development processes (vision, mission statement, strategic objectives and strategic outcomes) and the strategic processes (advocacy) to achieve the intended outcomes.

#### **6.9. Course facilitator's observations**

This conclusion is supported by the observations of one of the course facilitators who was requested to comment on the successes and failures of the online course. In fact, in response to the question "Do you think the objectives/expected outcomes of this course were met?" the course facilitator said, "On balance, I think yes." His justification was that the participation rate was respectably high considering the nature of the course, and the quality of participants' inputs was also high. It showed that they had grasped the issues of policy development processes.

Participation rates and the quality of input (as well as the feedback already received on the first round of online engagement plus the workshop) suggest that people have found it useful and it has helped them to engage in key problems. Also, it is important to remember that this was a pilot, so we have succeeded in testing the viability of this mode of delivery. Here, we have learned that the key to success is that people should have functional e-mail.

One of the biggest disappointments for the course facilitator was that, after the face-to-face workshop, participants limited their e-mails to learning activity submissions. His feeling, with which the evaluator concurs, was that they lost the opportunity for more dialogue. However, he believes that the participants' submissions were of a consistently high standard.

The biggest disappointment for me has been that, after the face-to-face workshop, people have mostly limited their e-mails to learning activity submissions. I think it went well in that people have continued to send these through pretty consistently, but I feel an opportunity for more dialogue was lost because people did not use the e-mail as much as they might have. I did try to keep in regular contact — sending at least one facilitator mail a week — but this did not seem to help. Nevertheless, people's submissions were of a consistently high standard, so at least we got their engagement in the structured component of the course.

The second disappointment for the course facilitator was that there was no possibility for a second face-to-face session towards the end of the course to wind things up. He strongly believed that this would have helped to focus participants' attention. This is evident from his comment:

I think that, overall, the design of the course was sound. The biggest problem was probably that there was no possibility of a second face-to-face session towards the end of the course. I think this would have helped to focus people's attention on completing activities a little sooner than they have done. Nevertheless, part of the logic of DE [distance education] is to have greater flexibility around completing activities, so I don't even think this was necessarily such a problem. As of today — 7/01/2002 — we have received five submissions for the final activity, which is nearly a third of the cohort. I don't think this is too bad considering the circumstances.

Also, the course facilitator acknowledged that he overestimated the participants' level of comfort with e-mails.

I think I probably also overestimated people's level of comfort with e-mail. I think people were in general less comfortable using e-mail than I had hoped they would be. Nevertheless, hopefully this course helped to build their confidence. It does remain a problem that some participants became excluded by their lack of access to e-mail facilities. When we set up the course, we included an assumption about

participants that they had functional e-mail facilities, but this was clearly not checked rigorously during the selection process. Participation rates might have been higher had this technical problem not existed (I think it is currently affecting up to five people who participated in the face-to-face session). On the plus side, they still get access to all of the resources contained on the CD.

Finally, the course facilitator observed that an accredited academic and/or professional institution did not certify the online course despite the quality of content (breadth and depth), the course facilitators' qualifications and the course duration. This observation was also echoed by the participants at the Maputo workshop. Therefore, another important recommendation is that an accredited academic and/or professional institution should certify the online course. Also, the course ought to be offered between June and September rather than between September and December. Towards the end of the calendar year it is difficult for most participants to complete their assigned learning activities. The online course tended to compete with the end-of-year deadlines at the workplace. Finally, as indicated in the preceding sections, the course facilitator concurs with the observation that all participants should have working e-mail facilities. This should be one of the preconditions for participating in the online course.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Terms of reference

August 2, 2001

Professor Cisco Magagula  
c/o University of Swaziland  
Kwaluseni Campus  
Private Bag 4  
Kwaluseni, Swaziland

VIA FACSIMILE: 268 51 87083/ 85276  
*Ref: C01-*

Dear Professor Magagula,

Re: Evaluation of a Course for Distance Education Policy Makers in Southern Africa

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) seeks to engage you, Professor Cisco Magagula (the Consultant), to act as an evaluator for a course for distance education policy makers in Southern Africa that is being offered during the period 1 September to 21 December 2001 to members of the Technical Committee on Distance Education.

#### **Nature of Task**

The nature of the task will include the following:

1. To conduct an evaluation of the above course whereby the course is composed of two components — the on-line component and the face-to-face component with delivery by way of a workshop.
  - a) In terms of the on-line component, the evaluation will need to focus on: the management process leading to the development of the course, the use of web site and on-line discussions, a review of the final on-line course materials, an assessment of the user friendliness of the on-line system and the different types of support offered to the participants along with the views of the participants to this form of learning.
  - b) In terms of the face-to-face component, the evaluation will need to focus on: the quality of the workshop structure, the process and materials used, the integration of the workshop for the participants and the appropriateness of the facilitators.
2. To utilize the attached Terms of Reference, which form an integral part of the contract, for further details associated with this task.
3. To liaise with Mr. Vis Naidoo, Education Specialist at COL and with Mr. Neil Butcher, of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) concerning any information required.

4. To prepare a final evaluation report in electronic format for submission to COL. The report will be due within two weeks following the formal conclusion of the workshop component of the course (December 2001).

### **Terms and Conditions**

1. An honorarium of Cdn\$ 3,000, based on an estimated time input of approximately 15 days, will be paid to the Consultant upon completion of the task outlined above and upon receipt and acceptance by COL of the final evaluation report within the timeframe specified.
2. COL will cover the costs of travel for the Consultant to the workshop. In addition, COL will make your hotel bookings and pay a per diem to cover incidental costs during the workshop. An expense claim, substantiated by receipts, will be forwarded to COL upon completing the necessary travel to claim any travel costs paid directly.
3. In consideration of the fee paid, the Consultant agrees to assign to COL any copyright arising from the works produced while executing the Contract. Similarly, the Consultant hereby agrees to waive in favour of COL any moral rights that may be associated with such works.
4. COL does not assume any liability for any injuries or damage to the Consultant incurred during the assignment. COL assumes no responsibility whatsoever for insuring the Consultant.
5. The Consultant hereby acknowledges that:
  - ♦ COL reserves the right to publish the report prepared herein; and
  - ♦ COL may circulate the report to users of choice, including posting in COL's World Wide Web site.
6. The COL professional staff member with whom you should liaise on all matters related to this agreement is Mr. Vis Naidoo, Education Specialist, Educational Technology.

To indicate your acceptance of these terms, please sign a copy of this letter where indicated and return a copy to us by fax (1 604) 775 8210.

Sincerely,

Doris McEachern  
Manager, Finance and Administration

---

Professor Cisco Magagula

---

Date

## APPENDIX 2

### Questionnaire covering the pre-Maputo period completed by the course participants

We would like you to take a few moments of your time to answer the following questions regarding the first part of the online course. The main objective of this evaluation is to assist us to make some improvements in the areas where there are serious weaknesses and shortcomings of this course as well as to improve future training activities in this area. We will appreciate very much your frank and critical comments to this questionnaire. Please put a checkmark in the appropriate box where provided.

#### Part One: General Information

1.1 When you were asked to join this course, how did you feel?

*Very Anxious* [ ]      *Somewhat Anxious* [ ]      *Least Anxious* [ ]      *Least Excited* [ ]  
*Very Excited* [ ]      *Somewhat Excited* [ ]

1.2 Please briefly explain why: -----  
-----  
-----  
-----  
-----

2.1 How do you feel now that you have been in this course for about three weeks?

*Very Anxious* [ ]      *Somewhat Anxious* [ ]      *Least Anxious* [ ]      *Not Anxious* [ ]

2.2 Please briefly explain why: -----  
-----  
-----  
-----

3.1 To what extent do you think you were prepared for this course?

*Well Prepared* [ ]      *Somewhat Prepared* [ ]      *Least Prepared* [ ]      *Not Prepared* [ ]

3.2 Please briefly explain your response to question 3.1. -----  
-----  
-----

-----

4.0 What is your level of knowledge regarding:

4.1 word processing?

*Below Average* [ ]    *Average* [ ]    *Above Average* [ ]

4.2 preparing and sending e-mail messages?

*Below Average* [ ]    *Average* [ ]    *Above Average* [ ]

4.3 browsing for information on the Internet?

*Below Average* [ ]    *Average* [ ]    *Above Average* [ ]

4.3 Viewing a CD using a CD-ROM

*Below Average* [ ]    *Average* [ ]    *Above Average* [ ]

### **Part Two: Access to a Computer**

5.1 Do you have access to a computer?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

5.2 If yes, is this your personal or an institutional computer?

*Personal Computer* [ ]    *Institutional Computer* [ ]

5.3 If this is an institutional computer, how often do you have access to it?

*During working hours*    [ ]  
*After working hours*    [ ]  
*Anytime I want to use it*    [ ]  
*Other (Please explain)*

5.4 Are you sharing the computer you are using for this course with anyone?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

6.1 What is the model of the computer you are using for this course?

486 [ ]    *Pentium I* [ ]    *Pentium II* [ ]    *Pentium III* [ ]    *Pentium IV* [ ]?

7.1 Does this computer have a CD-ROM Drive?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

8.1 Is this computer connected to the Internet?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

9.1 Do you have an E-mail address

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

9.2 If you do have an E-mail address, do you know how to access it?

Yes [ ]      No [ ]

9.3 In this course, to what extent did you find the instruction on “how to use an e-mail” helpful to you?

*Very Helpful [ ]      Somewhat Helpful [ ]      Not Helpful at All [ ]*

10.1 Please briefly explain your response to question 9.3 above -----  
-----  
-----  
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**Part Three: Accessing the online course**

11.1 How do you access this online course?

*Through the Internet [ ]  
Through a CD-ROM [ ]  
Other (Please explain)*

11.2 If you access the online course through the Internet, what browser are you using?

*The Internet Explorer [ ]      The Netscape Navigator [ ]      Other (please explain) [ ]*

12.1 Have you experienced any problems in accessing this course through:

- (i)    The Internet                      Yes [ ]      No [ ]
- (ii)   The CD-ROM                      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

12.2 If you experienced any problems in accessing this course through the Internet or CD-ROM, please briefly explain the nature of the problems.

-----  
-----  
-----  
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12.3 Briefly explain how you dealt with these problems.

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-----  
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## Part Four: Introductory Activity

13.0 When the facilitators introduced the online course to you, they explained its purpose, content, structure, expected outcomes, and how it will be offered. To what extent did you find the explanation:

13.1 on the purpose of the course helpful?

*Very Helpful* [ ]      *Somewhat Helpful* [ ]      *Least Helpful* [ ]

13.2 on the content of the course helpful?

*Very Helpful* [ ]      *Somewhat Helpful* [ ]      *Least Helpful* [ ]

13.3 on the structure of the course helpful?

*Very Helpful* [ ]      *Somewhat Helpful* [ ]      *Least Helpful* [ ]

13.4 on the learning outcomes helpful?

*Very Helpful* [ ]      *Somewhat Helpful* [ ]      *Least Helpful* [ ]

14.0 The first activity that you were requested to do was to prepare a short E-mail and send it to your colleagues introducing yourself as to who you were, which country you were from, your work, your position, what you did, what your interest was in this course, and what you hoped to gain from it. In the same E-mail you were asked to *identify* and *describe* two policies from your country: one which you considered to be successful and the other which you considered *unsuccessful*.

14.1 Did you succeed in sending the e-mail introducing yourself and describing the two policies in your country?      *Yes* [ ]      *No* [ ]

14.2 If you did succeed sending the E-mail, this was how many days or weeks after the course was launched?

*1 - 3 Days* [ ]      *4 - 7 Days* [ ]      *Two Weeks* [ ]      *Three Weeks* [ ]

14.3 If you did not succeed in sending the E-mail, could you please explain why?

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-----  
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15.1 You were advised to spend about two hours on this activity, did you find this advice helpful or not?

*Yes, it was very helpful to me* [ ]





Yes [ ]      No [ ]

17.2 If you have been able to access some of these readings, did you find them useful?

*Useless [ ]*

*Somewhat Useful [ ]*

*Very Useful [ ]*

17.3 Please explain your response to question 17.2 above.

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17.4 If you have not been able to access some of these readings, could you please explain why?

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### **Part Five: Activity 1, A Letter from the Minister**

18.1 Were you able to complete Activity 1, which was a “Confidential Memorandum (Letter) from the Minister of Education” of your country outlining her (his) vision for distance education in your country and share it with your colleagues through the e-mail?

*Yes [ ]      No [ ]*

18.2 To what extent did you find the Template helpful or otherwise in undertaking Activity 1, the “Confidential Memorandum (Letter) from the Minister of Education” of your country?

*Very Helpful [ ]      Somewhat Helpful [ ]      Least Helpful [ ]      Not Helpful [ ]*

18.3 If you were able to complete Activity 1, to what extent were your colleagues’ comments helpful in clarifying your thoughts?

*Very Helpful [ ]      Somewhat Helpful [ ]      Least Helpful [ ]      Not Helpful [ ]*

18.4 Please explain your response to question 18.3.

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18.5 If you were able to complete Activity 1, to what extent were the facilitators’ E-mail comments helpful in clarifying your thoughts?

*Very Helpful [ ]*

*Somewhat Helpful [ ]*

*Least Helpful [ ]*

*Not Helpful [ ]*

18.6 Please explain your response to question 18.5.

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18.7 Did you manage to review some of the supplementary resource readings on Distance Education Case Studies indicated in the CD?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

18.8 If you did you manage to review some of the supplementary resource readings on Distance Education Case Studies, to what extent were they helpful in clarifying your thoughts?

*Very Helpful* [ ]      *Somewhat Helpful* [ ]      *Least Helpful* [ ]      *Not Helpful* [ ]

18.8 Please explain your response to question 18.8 above

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19.0 After completing Activity 1, the “Confidential Memorandum (Letter) from the Minister of Education” of your country, receiving comments on this activity from your colleagues and facilitators, and reflecting on it, would you claim that this activity:

9.1 Encouraged you to think about components of a policy vision?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

19.2 Encouraged you to relate the vision to your country?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

19.3 Gave you an understanding and appreciation of key issues on policy development?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

19.4 Provided you with an opportunity to share ideas with your colleagues on policy development?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

19.5 Provided you with an opportunity to know your colleagues and understand their country?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

19.6 Introduced an activity “theme” for developing national policy to be continued throughout this course?      Yes [ ]      No [ ]

Thank you

### APPENDIX 3

#### Questionnaire covering the Maputo workshop period for course participants

We would like you to take a few moments of your time to answer the following questions regarding this workshop. Your responses will help The Commonwealth of Learning to improve future training activities in this area. Please put a checkmark in the appropriate box from questions 1 to 13.

1. The objectives of the workshop were clearly stated  
*strongly agree* [ ] *agree* [ ] *no opinion* [ ] *disagree* [ ] *strongly disagree* [ ]
2. My expectations of the workshop have been  
*fully met* [ ] *not met at all* [ ] *partially met* [ ]
3. The workshop's physical and logistical arrangements were  
*poor* [ ] *mediocre* [ ] *satisfactory* [ ] *good* [ ] *excellent* [ ]
4. The course content and its presentation were  
*poor* [ ] *mediocre* [ ] *satisfactory* [ ] *good* [ ] *excellent* [ ]
5. There was adequate time provided for various activities  
*sometimes* [ ] *always* [ ] *no opinion* [ ] *seldom* [ ] *never* [ ]
6. I participated in this course to  
*improve my performance in my present position* *yes* [ ] *no* [ ]  
*prepare myself for new tasks or responsibilities* *yes* [ ] *no* [ ]  
*gain general information and knowledge* *yes* [ ] *no* [ ]
7. Course materials (i.e., handouts) were  
*poor* [ ] *mediocre* [ ] *satisfactory* [ ] *good* [ ] *excellent* [ ]
8. Audiovisual materials were  
*poor* [ ] *mediocre* [ ] *satisfactory* [ ] *good* [ ] *excellent* [ ]
9. Pace of the course was  
*too fast* [ ] *satisfactory* [ ] *too slow* [ ]
10. Workload was  
*very light* [ ] *light* [ ] *okay* [ ] *heavy* [ ] *very heavy* [ ]

11. Occasions to discuss and actively participate were  
*insufficient [ ]      satisfactory [ ]      excessive [ ]*
12. The number of practical activities (i.e., demonstrations/hands-on) was  
*insufficient [ ]      satisfactory [ ]      excessive [ ]*
13. The length of the course/workshop was  
*insufficient [ ]      satisfactory [ ]      excessive [ ]*
14. Which components of the workshop did you find most valuable?  
.....  
.....  
.....
15. If some components were less valuable, please tell us which and why.  
.....  
.....  
.....
16. Suggestions for improvement:  
.....  
.....  
.....
17. Other comments:  
.....  
.....  
.....

## APPENDIX 4

### Questionnaire covering the post-Maputo period completed by course participants

#### Preamble

We are nearing the end of this course. Indeed some of you submitted your last activity (Activity 4) before the end of 2001. I wish to congratulate all of you for participating in this course. You will recall that this was the first time in this region to provide this course in this manner. Therefore, it is critically important that we get your critical views, impressions, suggestions and recommendations regarding the worthiness of this course and its various aspects. Your comments will be very useful in deciding whether or not the course should be offered the same way it has been offered or whether some of its aspects should be modified. Therefore, your critical views, impressions, suggestions, and recommendations concerning this course would be highly appreciated. I would, therefore, urge you to complete the questionnaire and return it to me as an attachment. You do not have to print it as a hard copy. You just need to complete it on the screen and then forward it to me as soon as possible. I thank you very much for your anticipated co-operation in this regard. It was a pleasure for me to get to know you personally. Let us keep in touch.

#### Questions

Please use the scale provided to rate the impact of the online course in your learning experience:

1.0 How would you rate your:

1.1 acquisition of knowledge on policy development for distance education was:

very poor [ ]          somewhat poor [ ]          no comment [ ]  
somewhat good [ ]      very good [ ]

1.2 interaction with the course facilitator through the e-mail was:

very poor [ ]          somewhat poor [ ]          no comment [ ]  
somewhat good [ ]      very good [ ]

1.3 interaction with other colleagues through the e-mail was:

very poor [ ]          somewhat poor [ ]          no comment [ ]  
somewhat good [ ]      very good [ ]

1.4 integration of acquired knowledge on policy development with work experience was:

very poor [ ]          somewhat poor [ ]          no comment [ ]  
somewhat good [ ]      very good [ ]



1.5 the overall ability of the online course to meet your work-related needs  
very poor [ ]          somewhat poor [ ]          no comment [ ]  
somewhat good [ ]      very good [ ]

1.6 level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the online course  
very dissatisfied [ ]      somewhat dissatisfied [ ]      no comment [ ]  
somewhat satisfied [ ]      very satisfied [ ]

2.0 My view of the online course is that:

2.1 The course content is:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.2 The course as a whole is:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.3 The intellectual challenge I got in the online course is:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.4 The facilitator's contribution to my learning has been:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.5 The quality of the facilitator's feedback has been:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.6 The facilitator's feedback to my online learning activities has been:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.7 The facilitator's encouragement to enable me to go on with course has been:  
Excellent [ ]      Very Good [ ]          Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]          Poor [ ]                  Very Poor [ ]

2.8 The facilitator, as a discussion moderator/facilitator, has been:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.9 The facilitator's handouts at the face-to-face workshop in Maputo were:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.10 Colleagues' critique of my online learning activities were:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.11 The group's online discussions on policy development were:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.12 The overall course delivery format (i.e., online and face-to-face) was:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.13 The required readings of the online course in the CD (i.e., articles, texts, etc.) were:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.14 The assigned learning activities and assignments given to learners were:

2.15 Providing us with opportunities to practice what we had learnt in the course was:

Excellent [ ] Very Good [ ] Good [ ]  
Fair [ ] Poor [ ] Very Poor [ ]

2.16 The extent to which this course met my expectation was:

Very Large Extent [ ] Large Extent [ ] No Comment [ ]  
Small Extent [ ] Very Small Extent [ ]

2.17 The aspects of the online course that contributed most to my learning were:

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.....

2.18 The aspects of this course that contributed least to my learning were:

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2.19 Please write any additional thoughts you may have on your overall satisfaction with the online course

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2.20 If this course will be offered again to other participants, I would recommend that the following aspects of it be done differently

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.....  
.....

2.21 The suggestions or recommendations that I would like to make to improve the negative aspects of this course are:

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.....

2.22 On the whole I think the course delivery strategy (i.e., online using the Internet and CD) and face-to-face interaction for one week should be *continued because*:

.....  
.....  
.....

2.23 On the whole I think the course delivery strategy (i.e., online using the Internet and CD) and face-to-face interaction for one week should be *discontinued because*:

.....  
.....  
.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ANTICIPATED TIMELY RESPONSE TO THIS FORM

## APPENDIX 5

### Questionnaire covering the whole online course completed by course facilitators

#### Preamble

The course is nearing its end. Indeed, some participants have submitted their last activity (Activity 4). Others will be submitting them shortly, I hope. I am in the process of compiling the evaluation report for the course. I thought I should solicit your views on it. I decided to prepare these broad questions to help you reflect on the course and give me your reaction.

- 1.0 As one of the facilitators/course designers and developers of this course, I would be grateful if you could share with me your critical reflections and thoughts about it in terms of its design, development, management, delivery strategy, and impact on participants.

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- 2.0 Do you think the objectives/expected outcomes of this course were met, and why?

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- 3.0 In your opinion, do you think offering this course online and then one week of face-to-face interaction in Maputo was cost-efficient (relatively cheaper) than offering it on a face-to-face basis only? Why?

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4.0 This has been a “pilot programme.” If you were asked to re: design, develop, manage, and offer it to other participants, what would you do differently and why?

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5.0 Please do not hesitate to make other general comments on this course which you feel would be helpful in improving its design, development, management, delivery strategy, and impact on participants.

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THANK YOU