

## Distance Education for Africa

### CONTENTS

- 2 M.Ed in the Teaching of Math and Science via Distance mode
- 3 Africa adds forty-four new Distance Education Specialists
- 5 Distance Education in African Universities: Rationale, Status and Prospect
- 7 UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa launched Master of Education in Information Communication Technology
- 8 My Experience as a Distance Education Student
- 9 NEWS IN BRIEF

In most developing countries provision of education is burgeoning. Supply of the conventional face-to-face mode of delivery has for various reasons failed to keep with the growing demand for higher education. Distance Education (DE; now known as open and distance learning), on the other hand, has shown its capability to meet the demands for schools with quality education. Distance learning is already being used to train a large number of teachers for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in Africa. It is estimated that distance-learning institutions are in existence in 34 African countries and their reach continues to expand. In the forefront of these efforts are the countries of South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which have been utilizing innovative distance education programmes for decades.

Although aspects of face-to-face instruction can simply not be duplicated by DE programs, such as the inspiration and individual insight provided by good teachers, it is important to employ the structural advantages that DE does offer.

Recent years of rapid development in Internet technology has given rise to the possibility for instructional competency based on the idea of lifelong learning, independent of the physical distance to a particular educational institution. Distance education opens the door for those of us whom, cannot attend traditional institutions of higher education. For instance, the regular educational systems of Africa have failed to meet the demand for higher education. The gap between the sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world also appears to be widening. Unless steps are taken to address the serious problems in education, the gap will in time become an insurmountable rift that will adversely affects other aspects of development. Distance education has a great potential in helping fill the gap by extending an opportunity for higher education to a wider market. Distance education provides education not only for part-time adults, but also for young students who have not been accepted to a conventional university or were not accepted in the field of their choice due to the fierce scarcity of seats in these countries as compared to the opportunities that exist in the West.

Research has indicated that using distance education may help solve the problem of the third world. According to Arger (1990), besides helping to overcome the exploding demand for higher education, distance education can utilize its comparative advantage through the following:

- Avoid the opportunity cost of taking people out of their normal employment for training;
- Reach a larger number of individuals;
- Democratize education;
- Raise educational standards through the use of high quality materials;
- Be cost effective and more efficient than traditional college campus based educational system.

Since its inception in 1999 the UNESCO, International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) has been involved in a seminal effort of strengthening these institutes and creating linkages with acclaimed universities around the world. This newsletter will highlight the current efforts of three of IICBA's distance education programs: SkyLight's MA program, a collaborative with an American company that seeks to strengthen the teaching of mathematics and science through a special degree for teachers' in these fields; and two postgraduate programs from Indira Gandhi National Open University (INGNOU), widely regarded as the leading mega-university that focuses exclusively on distance learning. With specially tailored courses already serving the needs of student teachers in Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar and Ghana, IICBA feels confident that these efforts represent a larger goal of harnessing the power of distance education for the benefit of the entire African continent.

DE in higher education institutions in Africa is at its genesis; however, a few higher education institutions are already well established and successful. The University of South Africa (UNISA) is a good example in this regard. It has opened the door to education for thousands. For instance, in the year 2000, it had more than 111,000 enrollees. The Open University of Tanzania is another example of distance teaching higher education institute in Africa, which caters for thousands of students.



Ethiopia continues to expand its utilization of various distance education programs for human resource development. The Ministry of Education has launched an ambitious program to update the skills 17,000 teachers to diploma level. The postgraduate level training through distance about distance education initiated by IICBA is a commendable venture. This is a step forward in creating trained manpower in the field of distance education. The Ministry's program, which began in 1999, includes participants from Ethiopia and Liberia who have received training on various aspects of distance education. The Ethiopian Civil Service College has also started distance education program, which combines printed material with innovative technology (that enables to receive and send image as well as voice and data). The technology installed in the college has Internet connection, which enables professionals in the country to share experiences and learn new things from professionals around the world.

Conducting teacher education through distance education is something that has been done for a long time in the USA. One reason could be that the American teachers have to do a test each fifth year in order to confirm their proficiency. This has led to a long tradition in distance education in the US. One company dealing with distance education is Skylight, which is a US based company

that was founded during the Kennedy era. There are two universities in the US which runs Skylight (Drake and St Mary's). Skylight is scheduled to start up in Ethiopia by February, 2004.

In cooperation with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) of India, study programmes leading to a Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and Master of Arts in Distance Education (MADE) are underway in Ethiopia among other countries and have in Ethiopia been a success story. IICBA plans to immediately expand the PGDDE and MADE programs to other Anglophone West African countries and start a Ph. D. program with IGNOU.

Though established quite recently (1985), IGNOU has evolved into one of the few Mega Universities fully dedicated to DE. With in-built quality assurance mechanisms, IGNOU is not only a nationally accredited institution in India, but also an internationally recognized center of excellence in DE. In light of its meritorious achievements in DE, the Indian government has entrusted IGNOU with a responsibility of promoting and coordinating open and distance learning systems in the whole country as well as determining standards.

What is happening in Ethiopia's classrooms? How can classroom activities be improved? Questions such as these are dealt with through a cooperation

between the University of Umea (Sweden) and Ethiopian Universities, facilitated by IICBA. The essential concept behind UMEA is the creation of a new formulation in the educator's development, whereby their perspective of their own practical work and its development is enhanced. UMEA's education is not exclusively through distance as it combines online assignments with face-to-face tutoring.

Insufficient resources and shrinking government budget allocations strain institutions of higher education in Africa. These institutions are not able to keep pace with demand for the Continent's need for specialized human capital. Distance education is one of the means of surmounting this crisis. Thus, the application of distance education as a mode of delivery for expanding opportunity for education and retraining has become a necessity. In this case, the prospect for distance education is essentially untapped. By introducing IICBA's Distance Education programs, this newsletter intends to portray DE in Africa as both an opportunity and a response to a crisis in education, and not merely a second-rate option for higher learning.

Finally this newsletter features a special tribute to Dr. Fay King Chung. Acting Director, Dr. Joseph Ngu's speech for Dr. Chung's retirement party is reprinted for our readers' benefit in its entirety.

## M.Ed in the Teaching of Math and Science via Distance mode

### A Collaborative program between UNESCO-IICBA and Addis Ababa University (AAU)

Development economists have long recognized the importance of having a country's populace be proficient in math and science fundamentals. The majority of Africa's population has not had the privilege of receiving quality instruction. Ethiopia is no exception to this problem. Teaching within these subjects has been hampered by lack of in-class resources and constrained from the allowance of individual creativity in presentation. UNESCO-IICBA (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa) is contributing to the capacity of teachers' pedagogical skills in the teaching of mathematics and science at the primary

and secondary levels throughout Africa. The central approach of this program is to supplement the existing undergraduate program which consists of both theoretically based and practical classes.

IICBA is currently concentrating its efforts in Ethiopia. In order to address this need IICBA sought partnership with experienced professionals in the field. Skylight Professional Development, or "Lesson Lab" a company representing a consortium of universities in the USA provides high quality text-based and video enhances courses in the teaching of mathematics and the sciences.



The IICBA Newsletter is published quarterly in English and French. Articles may be reproduced with attribution. We welcome editorial comments or inquiries about IICBA please address all correspondence to

The Editor  
IICBA Newsletter  
P.O. Box 2305  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Tel. 251-1- 55 75 87/89  
Fax. 251-1- 55 75 85  
E-mail: info@unesco-iicba.org  
Web-site: www.unesco-iicba.org

A team comprising of the Dean, Faculty of Education, the Associate Dean for graduate studies and IICBA staff traveled to Lesson Lab headquarters in Chicago, Illinois and on August 29, 2003 a sales agreement for the purchase of these materials was signed.

The new M.A. program will promote excellence through innovation in mathematics and science pedagogy and classroom methodology. The courses are text based and video supplemented; course-work will be conducted primarily through distance mode, but there will also be at least 30 hours of face-to-face tutorial assistance. The face-to-face interaction will be conducted by special-

ized tutors, recruited from AAU and trained by staff from SkyLight. Course work will concentrate on the integration of "knowledge" into instruction so as to pass on a higher conceptual understanding of the material from "facilitator" to "learner", which in turn will be mutually reinforced. Courses will include the following themes:

- Teaching methods and strategies for assessment in mathematics
- Models and methods of teaching biology
- Brain compatible chemistry
- Computer applications and technology for teaching physics

- Problem based learning and authentic curriculum models
- Assessment
- Action research

Prospective graduates of the program will be able to obtain their MA degree and become certified instructors at various teacher-education institutions throughout the country. Ongoing consultations with the Ministry of Education are aimed at maximizing access to students and ensuring program sustainability. It is believed that the AAU program will lay the foundations, so that by 2005 IICBA will be in the position to help other universities in the Country.

## Africa adds forty-four new Distance Education Specialists

Distance Education (DE) is increasingly being employed in Africa both for initial and in-service upgrading training of high-level professionals of all types and levels. Many African countries, including Ethiopia have adopted DE as an important vehicle for delivering, particularly in-service upgrading and updating training to all categories of teachers. However, in planning, organizing implementing large-scale in-service education for teachers through DE, many countries fall short of well-trained and qualified high-level DE specialists.

Cognizant of this fact, and as part of its capacity building initiative, the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), is currently cooperating with African countries, including Ethiopia, in training DE specialist at post graduate level. In cooperation with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) of India, study programs leading to a Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education (PGDDE) and Master of Arts in Distance Education (MADE) are underway in Ethiopia, Liberia, Madagascar and Ghana.

### PGDDE

The PGDDE is an Ethiopian success story. To date, of the 102 candidates enrolled from Ethiopia in four intakes 44 have successfully completed their studies. 25 have dropped out from the program for reasons ranging from traveling abroad, joining other profes-

sions, to heavy workload in their place of work. 33 students are still in the pipeline. In July 2003, 49 Ghanaian students were admitted in the PGDDE program through the cooperation and focal points of University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba.

The PGDDE program has been in operation in four African countries since July 1999. Table one shows student enrolment from Ethiopia, Madagascar, Liberia and Ghana (1999 - 2003).

On the other hand, despite the high level motivation and capabilities of the Liberian and Malagasy students, the achievement of the PGDDE course completion rate in these countries have for reasons that are obvious to all, not been as impressive as in Ethiopia. So far, only three Liberians managed to successfully complete the PGDDE package studies while none of the Malagasy students have done so.

In view of this, UNESCO-IICBA intends to develop a contingency plan to help students of both countries to complete their studies.

### MADE

Eleven Ethiopian and three Liberian students have enrolled with IGNOU in January 2002 on the MADE program as a first intake. IGNOU is currently processing the applications of 14-second intake candidates from Ethiopia. The MADE students were selected on the basis of their performance on the PGDDE.

With regard to the performance of the MADE students, six candidates from Ethiopia, have completed the course work including their research project and have also taken the final exams of the same. The rest of the group is through with more that 80 percent of the course work and are expected to complete their studies by the end of 2003.

Countries	No. of Intakes	Enrolment
Ethiopia	4	102
Madagascar	1	6
Liberia	2	35
Ghana	1	49
Total		192

Table 1: Enrolment in PGDDE program

Six National Tutors have been trained to assist in the academic counseling, face-to-face programs being implemented in Ethiopia. IICBA has plans to immediately expand the PGDDE and MADE programs to other Anglophone West African countries and start a Ph. D. program with IGNOU.

## IGNOU

Though established quite recently (1985), IGNOU has evolved into one of the few Mega Universities fully dedicated to DE. With in-built quality assurance mechanisms, IGNOU is not only a nationally accredited institution in India, but also an internationally recognized center of excellence in DE. In light of its meritorious achievements in DE, the Indian government has entrusted IGNOU with a responsibility of promoting and coordinating open and distance learning systems in the whole country as well as determining standards in the field of DE. IGNOU has also been accorded recognition by the Common Wealth of Learning, which after a rigorous evaluation conferred on it in 1993 the honor of "Center of Excellence in Distance Education" for producing high quality course materials.

## Vision into the Future

Right from its inception, UNESCO IICBA envisaged the integration of the PGDDE and MADE programs into the training activities of a few existing African tertiary institutions. This vision is part and parcel of the concept and practice of educational capacity building by empowering institutions. In relation to this, IICBA is now ready to go into partnership with African higher education institutions that are willing to integrate the PGDDE program into their own national programs. In Ethiopia, IICBA intends to establish such a partnership with the Addis Ababa University (AAU) and initiate a staged and gradual integration of the PGDDE into AAU's programs. In line with this, discussion with the staff of the AAU is already underway. As part of this initiative, a team of the university's staff have reviewed IGNOU's PGDDE course materials to see whether the package meets the accepted post-graduate study standards and the recognized distance teaching methods and principles.

The report of the review was positive with regard to both issues and recommended that the PGDDE can be integrated into AAU's program in two stages. In the initial stage, which will

last for a year, AAU will use IGNOU's course materials in their present form and cooperate with IICBA and IGNOU in teaching the first batch of 35 students. IICBA will provide resources needed in implementing the program at this stage. IGNOU may provide, at this stage, professional support such as, allowing AAU to use IGNOU course materials setting and grading the final exams and awarding diplomas. In the mean time, a team of experts will revise the course materials in an effort to make the course content more relevant for Ethiopia. A contract was signed with AAU in July 2003 to this effect.

The second stage in the process of integration will be a stage of complete and full integration of the PGDDE program into AAU's study programs. At this stage, AAU will take-over the whole responsibility, running the program including the provision of resources although UNESCO IICBA will continue to cooperate in soliciting support for the program.

IICBA is so far very much encouraged by the positive attitude of the university officials towards integration and will work with AAU and IGNOU to materialize this vision.

IICBA believes that training distance education specialists should continue until enough DE specialists have been produced to meet the needs of both public and private DE institutions, or at least a critical number of DE specialists that can impact the development of DE provision. With relatively high and unpredictable dropout rates and staff turn over, the training of more specialists is necessary to compensate for losses.

## Aims of the Programs

The PGDDE and MADE study packages serve the following aims:

- Promote awareness about the concept and utility of distance education in African countries.
- Develop the much needed human resources for the existing African Distance Education Institutions and many more that will arise in the near future.
- Create a core of high level Distance Education specialist in Africa that are capable of generating a body of indigenous knowledge in the field of distance education which is peculiar and relevant to the region.

## Specific Objectives

1. After successfully completing the PGDDE package, candidates will be able:
  - To understand the Educational Philosophy that underpins instruction in DE.
  - To design and develop self-learning DE learning materials.
  - Appreciate the role of learner support service in student learning and assist in organizing such a service as per the needs of users.
  - Understand management's systems appropriate to DE Institutions and assist in organizing management systems appropriate to the needs of DE systems.
  - Understand the characteristics communication technology used in DE and assist in media selection and utilization in DE systems.
2. After successfully completing the MADE package, candidates will also be able:
  - Understand scientific research methods employed in DE and design and conduct research on DE and report funding.
  - Design and develop curriculum for Distance learning programs.
  - Understand the economics of Distance Education and advise DE system on the economic perspective of DE.
  - Understand the role of staff development in DE and assist DE institution in planning and executing staff development schemes.

## Target Learners

The PGDDE and MADE are targeted mainly on the personnel's of African Teacher Education Institutions that are already engaged or are planning to engage in the provision of teacher inservice training through DE. In Ethiopia, most of the participants of the PGDDE and MADE programs were selected from the staff of the Teacher Education Colleges, Teacher Training Institutes, Faculties of Education of the Universities, Regional Education Bureaus, Educational Media Agency and the Civil Service College of Ethiopia.

# Distance Education in African Universities: Rationale, Status and Prospect

**Gebre Egziabher Debebe**

Lecturer, College of Education Addis Ababa University

Email: Gebre14@yahoo.com

*"Give people a handout or a tool, and they will live a little better,  
give them an education, and they will change the world."*

Distance education is the educational practice of bringing teaching institutions to the learner. The teacher and the student are physically separated by time and location, and the learner holds greater control and responsibility of his/her learning.

## Definition

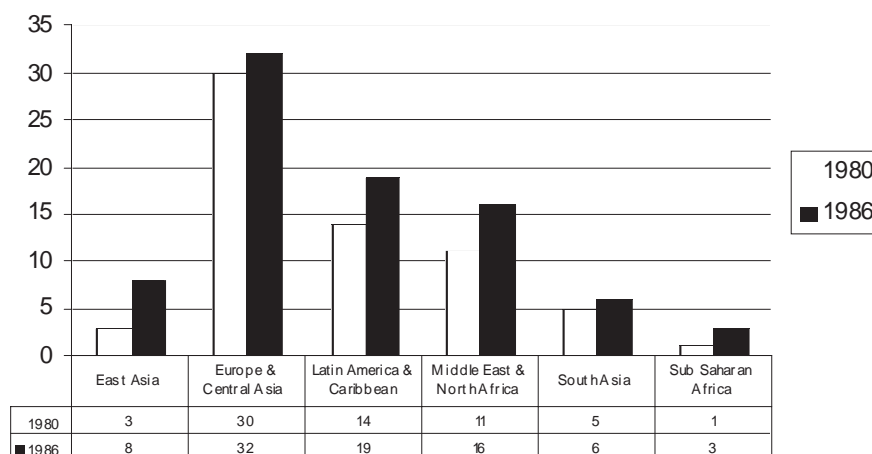
A number of individuals have defined distance education in different ways. The definition offered by Keegan (1990) may be more comprehensive. He has defined distance education through emphasis of the following features:

1. Quasi-permanent separation of student and teacher: the separation of the teacher and the student for most of the time.
2. The influence of educational organization in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support service. Distance education requires prior registration in a recognized institution (organization) and makes use of materials planned and prepared by the institution and get the necessary support.
3. Use of technical media: as the teacher and the student are separated for most of the time, it uses technical media such as print, video, audio, radio, television, etc in bridging the physical distance between the two.
4. Provision of two-way communication although the student and the teacher are separated, two-way communication through various media is employed. Such assignments play an important role in facilitating exchange of information between the student and the teacher and in breaking the problem of isolation of the student.

## Background

The enrolment gap among the different regions of the world is high, and enrollment in higher education institutions in Africa is extremely low. The reasons for such gaps range from historical to socioeconomic. Failure to seek alternative ways and total adherence to the traditional residential system of training could be mentioned as a contributing factor.

### Gross enrollment rate in higher education (percentage of relevant age group)



Source: World Bank (2000)

Many countries of the world have turned to alternative educational means such as distance education to train their human power needs. Research conducted on the effectiveness of distance education in many parts of the world has proven that it can be as effective as the conventional approach in producing trained human asset. Seventy years of research and summaries of 355 research reports have shown that there is no significant difference in terms of outcomes between distance and conventional students when measured by test scores (Arger1990). Similar studies by Chu and Schramm (1977) have revealed that students learn as well or better through distance education. As research has proven the effec-

tiveness of distance education, many countries of the world have started using distance education for human power development.

Distance education already contributes substantially to China's human resource development. For instance, according to the reports by Daniel (1996) China TV University enrolls 530,000 degree students in its

distance education programme while turning out 101,000 graduates per year. Turkey also utilizes distance education to train human power Anadolu University. This university enrolls 578,000 degree students and produces 26,000 trained human power per year (Daniel: 1996). Despite the limited access to higher education, distance education is not well utilized in Africa.

## Rationale

Distance education opens the door for education for those whom cannot attend regular higher education. For instance, the regular educational systems of Africa have failed to meet the demand for higher education. A report

by the World Bank (1988) cited by Jenkins (1989) has indicated that because of rapid population growth and economic stagnation, the gap between sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world appears to be widening. Distance education has a great potential in helping fill the gap. Jenkins has reported that distance education provides education not only for part-time adults, but also to young students who have not been accepted in to a conventional university or were not accepted in the field of their choice.

Research has made it clear that using distance education can solve the problem of the third world. According to Arger (1990), DE possess the following comparative advantages:

- Avoid the opportunity cost of taking people out of their normal employment for training;
- Reach larger number of individuals (massification of higher education);
- Democratize education;
- Raise educational standards through the use of high quality materials;
- Cost effectiveness and efficiencies over traditional college campus based educational system.

## Current Status

Distance education for higher education is at an early stage of development within Africa. The overall participation rate and number of programs and courses offered are small. Jenkins (1989) reported that although Africa has made some attempts in using distance education to extend formal education, so far, few African countries have attempted to provide higher education level training through distance education. Besides, the concept of distance education is novel for the majority of the people including professionals within the realm of education.

The growth of distance education in Africa is constrained by the following reasons:

- Low status is given to distance education.
- Lack of awareness regarding the true potential of distance education as one of the modes of delivering education to the masses. For example, policy makers, faculty mem-

bers of higher education institutions, and the public at large generally see distance education as inferior to regular programs.

- There is an acute lack of trained manpower in the field in most higher education institutions on the Continent.
- Adequate budget is not allocated to run distance education initiatives.

Despite these obstacles, a few higher education institutions have been successful. UNESCO - IICBA collaborative efforts with governments across the continent and established institutes such as the University of South Africa (UNISA) are classic examples of the kind of efforts that need to be expanded. IICBA's efforts have opened the door for education for thousands. However, these seminal efforts alone cannot match the pace of demand for DE. Just as traditional universities have diversified their modes of income, so to must institutes involved with distance education. Eventually it is hoped that entrepreneurs within the education field will multiply the linkages that have been created by IICBA between host governments and private ventures.

## Prospects

With the increasing demands for training, the role of distance education is receiving paramount importance worldwide. According to one report, at present, there are 986 distance-teaching institutions of different types and sizes located in 107 countries. The number of distance learners enrolled in higher education institutions around the world in the year 1997 was about 50 million. Growing rapidly, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions has reached approximately 90 million by the year 2000. It is expected to reach 120 million by the year 2025. As budget allocation stagnates while demand increases, higher education institutions in Africa will continue to be strained. Because of this, they are unable to produce the required human power. Distance education can be one way to escape the crisis. Thus the application of distance education as a mode of delivery for expanding opportunity for education and retraining has become a necessity. The prospect for distance education is enormous and untapped. Distance education in Africa should be seen as a

response to a crisis in education not as an optional extra to conventional education.

## Conclusion

Distance education is a means of providing access to higher education for the masses. Thus it should not be seen merely as a supplement to regular face-to-face programmes. It can be appropriately marketed as a lowcost alternative to expand educational opportunity. Furthermore it should be portrayed as a vital instrument for the production of the required trained human power. To meet this end, strong backing from governments, NGOs, academics, the private sector and others interested in the expansion of educational opportunity is critical.

Whatever development strategies Africa will design is dependent upon the skilled human power it will be able to create. The traditional residential programs alone cannot create such human power. In order to meet its demand for trained human power, Africa needs to use distance education. One can be hopeful that the great potential for distance education will catapult Africa towards a higher standing of living.

## References

- Arger, Geof (1990), 'Distance education in the Third World: Critical Analysis on the Promise and Reality,' Open Learning
- Chu, G. and Schramm W. (1975), Learning from Television: What the Research Says, ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED 109985
- Daniel, John S. (1996), Mega Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education, London, Kegan Page.
- Jenkins, Janet, "Some Trends in Distance Education in Africa: an Examination of the Past and the Future Role of Distance Education as a Tool for National Development," Distance Education (10) 41-44-48.
- Keegan, Desmond (1990), The Foundations of Distance Education, London, Rutledge. World bank (2000), Can Africa Claim the 21st Century? Washington D.C: World Bank.

Daniel, John S. (1996), *Mega Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*, London, Kegan Page.

Jenkins, Janet, "Some Trends in Distance Education in Africa: an Examination of the Past and the Future Role of Distance Education as a Tool for National Development," *Distance Education* (10) 41-44-48.

Keegan, Desmond (1990), *The Foundations of Distance Education*, London, Rutledge. World bank (2000), *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?* Washington D.C: World Bank.

## UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa launched Master of Education in Information Communication Technology

The UNESCO Director General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura launched the Master of Education in Information Communication Technology (MEd-ICT) Program at Cape Coast University in a colorful ceremony on Saturday January 10, 2004. The MEd-ICT Program is a pilot project planned to run in three Sub-Saharan African countries: Ghana, Uganda, and Ethiopia. It is a two year regular program designed for delivery by distance. The first course facilitators training will take place in the Sudan University of Science and Technology, Khartoum, Sudan from January 16 to 21, 2004.



UNESCO Director General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are overwhelmed with major tasks related to access, finance, quality, internal and external efficiency and therefore are unable to meet the demand for education. In order to respond to these challenges, African countries are following the global trend in use of that Information and Communication Technologies. ICTs can play a critically important role in assisting Africa to tackle many of the problems they are presently facing, including expansion and improvement of their education systems through the use of distance education.

ICTs' rate of growth in the African region is increasing rapidly. Countries are building a National ICT Network, SchoolNET, Research and Academic Network, etc. Computer Science is being made part of the Secondary School Curriculum and there is a strong urge to integrate ICT into the general curriculum. Some of the African Governments have formulated a strategy of universal access to roll out ICTs in every government district and every school. The SchoolNet projects in SSA have evolved out of the development of the Education Sector Reform Plans (ESRP), Education For All (EFA) and the Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP). The SchoolNet can be used to roll out national distance education and learning programs. Through SchoolNet, the governments hope to increase the population's literacy rate, develop the skills and capacity of the future workforce, and improve the quality of teachers and education in general.

However, evidence shows that many of the current attempts at implementing computers in African schools are slowed down by insufficient teacher training in the effective use of computers in the classroom, both from a pedagogical and a technological standpoint. Teachers do not know how to set up and maintain their computers, nor do they know how to integrate them effectively into classroom teaching.

Some of the risks identified in implementing SchoolNet include the following.

1. The technology may not be effectively used at individual SchoolNet site because technical staffing at the user end is inadequate.
2. SchoolNet will not be used as a capacity-building tool since there is no clear investment in new skills development. The training component falls far short of its potential.

3. Lack of training to use the new technologies. The risk is of slow acceptance, adoption, and endorsement of new technologies or that the technologies will go unutilized.

In order to address this dire need for ICT professionals in the education sector, UNESCO-IICBA has introduced as a pilot project the Master of Education in Information Communication Technology. Initially the pilot project will run in three universities in SSA countries: Cape coast university (Ghana), Makerere University (Uganda), and Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia). We have gained a valuable experience by running the program for the first time in SSA in the Sudan. The program is well matured in the developed countries. However, it is totally new for SSA. A new curriculum is tailor-based on the one from South Africa (University of Pretoria) and using the experience gained from the Sudan to suite SSA conditions. A special emphasis is made on the mode of delivery and choice of local participating institutions. The local institutions are selected on the grounds of having experience in running postgraduate programs in the fields of ICT and Education, qualified staff that can facilitate the courses and quickly acquire the expertise. Furthermore the project is designed in such a way that the local institutions would be able to build multimedia teaching facilities, acquire and develop content to enable them run the program by themselves at the end of the project.

As an effective strategy to achieve the objectives of the project the local universities are required to adopt the curriculum, get formal approval and finally award degree for the successful students.

Initially the content will be delivered from South Africa (University of Pretoria), and USA (George Washington University) using ICT and face-to-face modes. About 25 student-teachers from each country are targeted.

The successful graduates of the program will have acquired skills, knowledge and understanding in the use of ICT for education.

Once IICBA gains adequate experience in running the program, it

hopes to expand to other universities in SSA. IICBA is also running a similar program in Cameroon. The lessons learned from this country would be valuable to expand the program into other universities in Francophone Countries.

## My Experience as a Distance Education Student

Aderajew Mihret T.

Before I began my studies with IGNOU, I had been working as a conventional college instructor and had no appreciation for the system of distance education. My first exposure came as a course writer in Project 17,000 (Distance Education for Second Cycle Primary School teachers in Ethiopia). It was opportunity to develop print-based material for physics courses at the tertiary level that enabled me to closely scrutinize the system of distance education. The following are my impressions of my experience, both positive and negative.

Though it was very intensive for a short period of time, the training I acquired to develop the self-instructional material initiated my interest in distance education and its theories and art it is defined by. Thoughts can become a reality when time allows. For me it was UNESCO IICBA which dropped by my way with a chance for my Post Graduate Diploma and Master of Arts Degree in Distance Education and allow my dream to become a reality. What if I call IICBA a messenger that clarified the course needed to crystallize my vision?

I found my course studies to be very attractive and challenging. Its philosophy being a paradigm shift from the conventional system, I believe it instills a new life to the rigid, traditional educational process. In my course work, I have attained knowledge of developing the following forms of distance learning material: support services and their organization, curriculum development, growth and philosophy, technology, research, economics, and how to develop a staff for a distance education institute. I have also mastered how to carry on research in distance education, which is applicable to conventional schools as well. I've acquired new knowledge as well as innovated systems that we have previously used at conventional schools.

Although the appropriate institutions are not yet in place, which can absorb and make use of the knowledge

attained through distance education, I carried our research on the self-instructional nature of physics courses being given in Project 17,000. Until now, I have only been applying a minimum amount of the knowledge I obtained in distance education, working at a private college. I long for a National institute to be established in order to fully exploit my knowledge.

As a student of distance education, both PGDDE and MADE, I have found the content of the courses being systematically structured and organized. The course is divided into modules (five modules for a given course). Each module is made to consist of an appropriate number of units, which are interconnected with one another and progress from simple to complex issues. Each module begins with an introduction of the module focus, what tasks are expected on the part of the learner, as well as any prerequisites. Each module then provides the very objectives that it seeks to achieve at the end of his/her study. Finally, the content is further broken down into units, sections and sub-sections together with a unit introduction and unit objectives, so that it flows from what is readily understood towards what is new and complex. It could be said that the content is presented in a "self-instructional" format so that the learner can read, question and cross-check responses by referring to the referring to the feedback at the end of each module.

As a full-time student, the course consumed most of my time, and all of my leisure time. The course material is densely packed with rich information. Ideas are clearly presented and facts are well-structured. I was therefore required to understand everything in the module and their various interrelationships. Had I not used almost all of my leisure time, I could not have made it. I was made to take 60 credit hours both for PGDDE and MADE programmes - twice the credit hours required for a conventional MA programme. As men-

tioned, the content is systematically presented, and therefore I did not face any difficulty created by the presentation of the course material.

I am a student that tries to understand concepts primarily through reading. As a distance student, I was free to choose my own style of reading, my own pace of study and could budget a time for study that was most convenient. Most importantly, I was not forced to look for other references if I wanted elaboration of a particular subject. The course materials are "self-contained", which is to say that everything is explained within the course material.

I faced two major problems during my experiences as a student of IGNOU: the delay in getting feedback for assignments and examinations, and the delay issuing the diploma and the degree. Students of conventional schools receive feedback on their assignments and examinations based on the already established schedules of their institutions. They can easily drop in and ask the professor if there is any inconvenience. Distance learners, however, cannot physically reach his/her school whenever there is a problem as a spatial separation puts a barrier between him/her and the institution. However, this problem can be greatly mitigated for a distance learner that is electronically connected with the institute. What matters most is the commitment of the institution to serve the students as to the definitions of the system.

As a result of not being able to physically present my degree for the MADE programme seven months after completing the course, I have seen some golden opportunities go by. It is really a pity. Had IGNOU been located in Addis or somewhere nearby, I could have held my degree in my hands and introduced to those institutions and organizations that apologized for the positions I missed.

Ethiopia is a country that must deal with inadequate access to education. This is the country's most pressing issue. Its future depends on how quickly and effectively the National system can be further developed. This requires more well-trained professional that can assist a national effort to change of direction, content and methodology in the current cur-

riculum. Although our numbers are currently limited, our country is in a position to make use of the knowledge we have acquired, especially related to the core issues of distance education. I strongly wish to contribute to one or more of the issues in distance education when there appears to be a demand for expansion of the system on a national basis.

I would like to express my gratitude to UNESCO IICBA for providing this programme and would also like to remind them of the promise they made: that the top graduates of MADE would be allowed to continue for their Ph.D. I know that I'm not alone in my hope that there will be opportunity to further advance my career via the system of distance education.

## NEWS IN BREIF

### **Dr. Fay King Chung, Founding Director of UNESCO IICBA, Retires, 19 December 2003, Addis Ababa**

The founding Director of IICBA has retired after five years of dedicated service. Under Dr. Chung's leadership, UNESCO IICBA developed and expanded its programmes and activities in the areas of teacher education, distance learning, cost-effective utilization of ICT's for education, development of HIV/AIDS materials for education, curriculum development and education for nomadic pastoralists. Dr. Chung's varied positions include Chief Educational Planner, Ministry of Education, Zimbabwe; Minister of Education and Culture, Zimbabwe; Chief of UNICEF Education Section; and Special Adviser on Education to the Organization of African Unity. These experiences all contributed to the vision brought to IICBA by Dr. Chung and the direction Dr. Chung has taken the young Institute in consolidating and scaling-up its programmes for the benefit of the African continent.

Dr. Chung's farewell party was held on the 20 December 2003, at the Hilton in Addis Ababa. The festive affair was attended by friends, colleagues and distinguished guests. Speeches were given by Addis Ababa University Professor Dr. Teshome Nekatibeb, distinguished Minister of Education Woizero Genet Zewdie, UNESCO Director Mr. Condé, UNICEF Chief of Education Dr. Aline Bory Adams, Assistant Secretary General to the ECA Dr. Lala Ben Barka and Mr. Joseph Ngu who has assumed the position of acting Director at IICBA. Mr. Ngu's inaugural speech has been reprinted in its entirety. Mr. Ngu's speech was followed by similar accounts that recalled fond personal experiences, and a common theme of admiration and respect for her service to Africa was evident. Much skepticism was expressed that the so-called "retire-

ment" would have any effect on slowing Dr. Chung's varied activities down. Dr. Chung herself said that her post-retirement plans include writing stories, publishing articles and teaching University classes in her home country, Zimbabwe. In her farewell address she stated her expectation that IICBA would surpass the productivity the Institute enjoyed under her guidance and tutelage. Everyone expects a visit back to Ethiopia in the not-too-distant future.

### **Mr. Joseph Ngu's Farewell Speech for Dr. Fay King Chung, The Hilton Hotel, 19 December 2003, Addis Ababa**

It is a great honour and privilege for me to say a few words about our distinguished leader, colleague and friend, Dr. Fay King Chung. May I first express my deepest gratitude to the Government and people of Ethiopia that have hosted us, UNESCO IICBA over the past five years. I would also like to express my appreciation to our sister organizations within the United Nations family who have helped assure that we stand firmly on our own.

Dr. Fay Chung who we are honoring today, is the founding Director of the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa. Dr. Chung is also an educator with teaching experience that varies from adult literacy and education, to secondary school teaching during colonial Rhodesia, polytechnic and further education teaching in Britain, lecturing at the University of Zambia, and teacher education for primary and secondary school teachers during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe. She has also held leadership positions in education while serving as Chief of education planning, Ministry of Education, Minister of Education and Culture, Zimbabwe; Chief of UNICEF Education Section; and Special Advisor on Education to the Organization of African Unity.

Today, we honor Dr. Fay Chung because she is a great leader with vision and commitment and I am proud to say that for the time that I've known her, she has educated me on what leadership is all about. She has shown us that effective leadership is about character, it is about creating a social architect that is capable of generating intellectual capital. I cannot exaggerate the fact that when Dr. Chung has strong determination to achieve a goal or realize a vision, she defines the "reality", which sets the course and direction that we must follow. She has the capacity to generate and sustain trust on all that we do. As the real leader that she is, Dr. Chung has an uncanny way of enrolling us and others in her vision through her optimism-sometimes, I might add, her unwarranted optimism. Finally, I cannot neglect to mention that as a leader, we will miss her at UNESCO IICBA. Dr. Chung has a bias towards action that results in success, and that translates vision into reality.

At UNESCO IICBA, Dr. Chung has built and expanded the activities and programmes in teacher education, in the use of ICT's in Education, in curriculum development, in nomadic education, in supporting programmes in women's leadership and now we can count on the extensive electronic libraries, videos and interactive CD ROMs to support education in many countries throughout the continent. The way forward for us now is to consolidate and expand what she initiated just five years ago. We are counting on her continued advise and support.

Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished friends, I think the UN should scrap the retirement age of 62 for its staff. The UN must move away from the idea of a fixed age at which people must stop working.

I know you will join me in wishing Dr. Chung a productive retirement. We will miss her dearly.

I thank you for your attention.