

CASE STUDY

Faculty of Education and Language Studies



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Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA)

THOUSANDS of African teachers and their schoolchildren are set to benefit from an initiative to bring distance education to some of the remotest parts of the continent.

Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) is a partnership programme aimed at improving the overall quality of teaching, with particular emphasis on basic education. This research and development programme began in Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania and has been extended to include Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. It will provide classroom based training for teachers, helping meet the demand to train thousands more teachers.

The OU is working in collaboration with a consortium of African institutions and international organizations. The African institutions have authored the modules for their countries to suit their local educational needs.

“What is unique about this programme is that the TESSA materials will be freely available as ‘open educational resources’ via the TESSA web portal, available for download and printing. This means that any institution in the world can adapt and localise these for their own teacher training and professional development programmes and any teacher can use them in their teaching.” said Anne Roberts, TESSA Manager in the Faculty of Education and Language Studies. “The OU is working alongside African institutions because they know what the local educational needs are.”

The idea is that these and other institutions will provide the facilities by which local educators can learn whilst in the classroom. It enables the local educators to build a locally versioned curriculum and provides school teachers with guidance, materials and activities with which to work. The focus initially is on the teaching of language and literacy, numeracy, science, life skills and social studies and the arts. A huge range of materials will be available: 750 sections across 5 module areas, with 2,250 activities localized into different national contexts. There will be nine country versions translated across 5 languages (Arabic, English, French, isi-Xhosa and Kiswahili). A series of mini-audio dramas using actors from the BBC World Service Trust Voices Team in Nigeria will enrich the teacher education materials.

A Teachers in Africa radio season has also been produced via the BBC World Service Trust. It is hoped that these will help contribute to the debate about the teaching profession in Africa. These can be listened to via the BBC website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/networkafrica/news/cluster/2007/06/070524_tessa.shtml

TESSA is a major research and development activity, developmentally testing and trialling materials, commissioning research studies and presenting at seminars and conferences. TESSA has established a ‘Teachers’ Lives in challenging rural contexts’ project with the support and co-operation of consortium members. This will give a personal meaning to the challenges facing teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Funding for TESSA has been provided by a £2 million donation from The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Trust, which also funded the development of the OU’s Ferguson Centre, set up to develop intercontinental research projects in Africa and Asia. Further funding was received from the Hewlett Foundation of £500,000 for versioning and research into the feasibility of extending the TESSA concept to the education of secondary Mathematics and Science teachers. The British Council has provided £100,000 to develop and evaluate distance teacher education programmes at mass scale in Nigeria and Sudan and the OU alumni have contributed towards study visits and research scholarships.



For more details about TESSA visit www.tessafrica.net or contact fels-tessa@open.ac.uk