

Distance Education Association of Southern Africa

DEASA Executive Secretary's report

1.0 Introduction

The DEASA is served through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the DEASA and SADC-CDE office since 2012. The MoU was renewed in 2016 and enables the DEASA to enjoy secretariat services which are provided gratis. The MoU allows the two to collaborate and share the development and publication of the DEASA/SADC-CDE International Journal of Distance Education. DEASA committed to avail expertise that the SADC-Centre could utilise for various capacity building initiatives. The collaboration has provided stability to DEASA's activities in terms of coordination and administration such as running the annual conference and general meeting every September.

2.0 Summary update on DEASA activities

The main DEASA activities revolve around its annual conference and general meetings. The Centre continues to support the DEASA as its secretariat and covers 13 countries that are also SADC member states. The Non DEASA members are Seychelles and Madagascar. However, under its main mandate of capacity building in ODL in the SADC region, the Centre managed to bring Madagascar on board and plans to persuade her to join the DEASA.

The 2017 activities are being hosted by Zambia who has been the Chair of the Association since September 2015. Elections of new members will take place during this AGM for both the Executive Committee and Country Representatives. It is recommended that each country submits a substantive member and an alternate.

In 2016, no conference was held due to the expected host, Zimbabwe pulling out at the eleventh hour. Effort to find an alternative host proved futile as time was not on our side. In order to avert hosting challenges occurring again, the DEASA Executive Committee revised the hosting schedule and agreed some binding principles. The Secretariat uses every opportunity to lobby for support for the DEASA. Thus the schedule was shared as part of the SADC-CDE report to the Senior officials responsible for Education and Training during the Joint Meeting of SADC Ministers for Education, Training, Science, Technology and Innovation (ET-STI) meeting in June 2017 in the Kingdom of Swaziland.

2.1 DEASA Working Committees

The Secretariat undertook an audit to resuscitate the working committees and started with the operating Research and Analysis Committee. The Secretariat wishes to commend the Chair and working committee members for their relentless effort in keeping the Committee alive and by extension the DEASA. The Secretariat proposed its strengthening and made the following recommendations to the EXCO:

- a) that Committee representation be by country as DEASA membership continues to grow and representation by institution could become cumbersome.
- b) Enhancement of quality assurance, segregation of responsibilities and to have more members serving in the DEASA structures i.e. not to have EXCO members serving at both Committee and EXCO level
- c) Countries who only had one member to have a second member for continuity e.g. **Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo** etc
- d) Introduce tenure which could be aligned to the EXCO serving period to ensure active participation
- e) Introduced a nomination form and use this model for all other committees.

Appendices: Roles & Responsibilities and Committee membership list for all the 4KPAs. These were not dated so it is not clear when they came into being or how long the Committees were to serve.

2.2 Revamping of the DEASA website

The DEASA website resides at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The Honorary Treasurer oversees the website. The website has been re-registered following deregistration in 2016. The new domain name is: www.deasa.org. A consultant has been engaged to re-create the content, look and feel of the website with the main aim to revamp it to ensure usability and relevance

Work is on-going to update it. A number of DEASA documents have been uploaded and are available to the membership. These include country and conference reports, publications, operation/procedure manuals, Minutes etc. It is critical that the DEASA EXCO submits profile information about itself so that the membership and public are always informed as to the DEASA's existence.

2.3 Research and Publication

The DEASA/SADC-CDE International Journal of Open and Distance Learning which is published annually following the yearly DEASA Conference has not done well due to a

lack of transparent procedures and processes. The need to engage a new Editor-in - Chief also needs to be expedited. The EXCO needs to commit resources in this area as practitioners are no longer interested in volunteering their expertise. It is recommended that Conference Proceedings report be immediately agreed for the current conference while advertising for the Editor-in-Chief. It is further recommended that the new DEASA EXCO tables the publication with all its accessories such as the Editorial Board, review procedures and responsibilities as well as other requirements as priority

2.4 The Distance Education Practitioner Profile in the SADC Region database

The database was updated through a Survey in 2015 in collaboration with DEASA led by Dr Bogadi Nage- Sibande of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL). It details where to find ODL experts in the SADC Region and what kind of ODL expertise is available. This is an area that requires on-going service as new entrants come on board. Visit the website at www.deasa.org to find out if your institutions and membership are represented.

2.5 Capacity Building in the DEASA

The DEASA benefits from Capacity building projects undertaken by the SADC Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE). The Centre projects are carried out with the support of the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The Centre falls under the technical supervision of the Senior Advisor, Open Schooling at COL and administratively reports to BOCODOL Executive Director.

Submissions for short-term and long term training needs are presented by institutions through the DEASA country representatives. To date, the SADC-CDE has impacted 386 ODL practitioners either sponsored for individual training or group programmes.

The main challenge encountered is submission of same names for all the trainings. This leads to people often dropping out as at times they will be too busy with other engagements. It also robs the institutions of continuity with practice when the limited trained people leave. (Appendix 2006-2017 Beneficiaries from SADC – CDE initiatives).

For details on the SADC-CDE functions go to: www.sadc-cde.com

3.0 2016 -2017 DEASA Membership Applications

The Secretariat received 6 applications from potential members and presents them for consideration as follows:

	Institution	Contact person	E-mail
1.	Texila American University (Zambia) TAUZ is part of Texila American University –TAU and it is registered with Higher Education Authority, Ministry of Higher Education in Zambia. TAU is a Consortium, having campus and partner universities and hospitals across Americas, Africa and Asia.	Mr.Sreebalakumar – Director operations	Zambia@tauedu.org / bala.k@tauedu.org / s.saju@texila.net
2.	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Malawi). A Directorate of Open and Distance Learning within the university offers 4 Bachelor’s Degree Programmes in agriculture related fields through ODL.	Dr. Joshua Valeta – ODL Coordinator	odl@bunda.luanar.mw
3.	UNICAF University (Malawi), a higher education institution registered and approved by the National Council of Education in Malawi. They offer degree, masters and PhD programmes.	Mr. Christoforos Ioannou	c.ioannou@unicaf.org
4.	Instituto Superior de Ciencias e Educacao a Distancia (ISCED), Mozambique	Mr. Wisdom Machacha	wmachacha@isced.ac.mz
5.	DMI –St. Eugene University	Prof. Rajaram Gurusamy	director_ivdl@dmiseu.edu.zm
6.	Instituto Superior de Gestao, Comercio e Financas (ISGECOF), Mozambique	Prof. Doutor Julio Goncalves Muterua Cunela e Dra. Tereza de Isabel Adriano	isgecof2009@gmail.com / isgecof@hotmail.com

4.0 **Potential Collaboration**

The Secretariat received on behalf of the Chairperson a request for Support from the Institute of Open and Distance Learning in Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. The Institute has planned a Distance Education and Open Learning in Africa Conference to be held from 21st to 24th August 2018, in Africa Nazarene University, Ongata Rongai, Kenya. The Institute is exploring establishing a national association for distance

education and open learning in Kenya (Nadeolke) and would like to learn from DEASA. The contact person is Ms. Rebecca Wambua, the Director of the Institute.

Executive Management is requested to consider supporting this request

5.0 Challenges facing the Secretariat and subsequently DEASA

- Poor communication as often changes within the institutions are not communicated to the Secretariat
- Weak structures as limited institutional budgets and personnel often changes in the member institutions affecting the maintenance of the subscription fees, attendance at meetings & the conference, Conference hosting

6.0 Recommendations

- DEASA Chairperson to attend the Joint Ministers' meeting and articulate the Association's needs
- Streamline DEASA structures to ensure vibrancy and sustainability
- Lobby internal governance structures for budget support and time to carry out the Associations mandate
- Consider servicing the DEASA membership in all three SADC languages for ease of growing ODL in the Region.
- Establish the Heads of Institutions Forum /Counsel as a permanent structure of the DEASA i.e. separate the Country representative role so that the reps are more hands on with national ODL associations or institutions and work more closely with the Working Committees and the Secretariat.