

E-Learning as A Mediating Tool to Support Transformative Capacity Building for Sadc Teacher Educators and Partnership Collaboration

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of e-learning mediating tool(s) for an online co-engaged action-orientated sustainable training programme in the southern African region. The UNESCO / Rhodes University Sustainability Starts with Teachers capacity-building programme was implemented in teacher education institutions in 11 southern African countries in collaboration with partners from Sweden. Following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme transitioned to an online learning platform in 2020 and has since been successfully implemented in eight SADC countries. The study is informed by cultural, historical activity theory that emphasises the significance of mediation tools in supporting expansive learning and ecosystem in two phases: Phase 1 involved the development of the e-learning mediating tool (online course platform) and Phase 2 which involved monitoring the implementation and use of this tool. Data for the study is constituted from programme development data and a variety of monitoring data captured in two substantive programme reports in 2020 and 2021.

The findings highlight that to utilise e-learning as a mediating tool capable of facilitating expansive learning and transformation towards sustainability, certain conditions needed to be in place, which is necessary for both the development and monitoring phases. These include adequate time, an understanding of the e-learning pedagogical processes and learning platform functionalities. The successful deployment and use of the e-learning mediating tool depended on interconnected learning systems that supported the development of digital literacy skills, continuous online support, and parallel communication tools. This paper concludes that online learning networks between partners across countries and continents supported by specially designed online mediating tools can successfully support professional learning.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, global partnerships, teacher education, e-learning mediating tools.