

**The principal purpose of the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) research and development network is to improve the quality of, and extend access to, teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa.**

It is estimated that across Sub-Saharan Africa a third of existing primary teachers are unqualified or under qualified. To meet the United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of universal primary education by 2015 requires an extra four million teachers. Training teachers in such numbers presents considerable challenges. Across the region standards of pupil achievement are low and the importance of high quality teaching in shaping pupils' educational experiences is increasingly being recognised. Teacher education is a major cause for concern.

TESSA is a direct response to these challenges. TESSA was initiated in 2005 to address the following key objectives:

- ♦ to create a network of African universities, working alongside The Open University, UK and other international organisations to focus on the education and training needs of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa
- ♦ to support the exploration and development of school based modes of teacher education in which teachers develop their competencies and skills to meet the needs of pupils in their own classrooms
- ♦ to design and build a multilingual Open Educational Resource (OER) bank, modular and flexible in format, that is freely available to all teacher educators and teachers in the region.



#### *What are OERs (Open Educational Resources)?*

The TESSA materials are all 'Open Educational Resources' (OERs) and are available in digital format from the TESSA website and also on CD-ROM. This means these materials can be freely downloaded, adapted, translated and integrated with other materials in courses and programmes for teachers and teacher educators at no cost.

As such, OERs have tremendous flexibility, enabling easy sharing and reuse within the TESSA network around the world.

#### **Achievements 2005 - 2011**

The TESSA network is growing and currently 12 African countries are actively engaged in TESSA activities. The network meets regularly and has accessed multiple sources of funding income.

More than 700 African academic teacher educators have participated in the TESSA process including authoring and adapting the core TESSA study units.

The TESSA study units for primary teachers have been adapted to ten country contexts and are available on the TESSA website in four different languages: Arabic, English, French and Kiswahili.

All TESSA study units contain a series of activities that participating teachers can carry out in their classrooms. Guidance handbooks have been created for teacher educators to help integrate and make effective use of study units in their courses

It is estimated that in 2010, 400,000 teachers on 19 teacher education programmes will have benefitted from their engagement with the TESSA resources and lessons.

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**The Open  
University**



## Awards

In November 2009, the Open University, UK, was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for higher education, for its work on the TESSA programme. The TESSA network also received the Leadership Award for exemplary Open Educational Resource (OER) practices at the eLearning Africa Conference held in Dakar, Senegal in May 2009.



In November 2011, TESSA was awarded a WISE award at the World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha, Qatar. The awards identify, showcase and promote innovative educational projects around the globe.

## TESSA Research Investigations

TESSA activity includes a number of research strands in addition to activity concerned with the monitoring and evaluation of TESSA materials use:

- ◆ Ethnographic study of the professional experiences of female teachers in rural schools
- ◆ Analysis of ICT policy development and practice in teacher education
- ◆ Adaptations and localisations of OERs for use in different contexts: what is the form of these localisations and what experiences, knowledge and reflections do teacher educators draw on when making modifications?
- ◆ Analysis of the range of modes of use of classroom focussed OERs within a variety of programmes and the factors which influence successful use
- ◆ Formative evaluation of the influence of TESSA OERs: what do teachers (and teacher educators) gain from engagement with the resources to help them improve their practice?

"The education and training of teachers represents one of the greatest challenges for education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. TESSA is an imaginative and creative response to that. Most importantly, it stresses the value of raising standards through international cooperation."

*Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah*



## Current developments 2011 - 2013

- ◆ The TESSA network is undertaking a small number of projects examining in detail TESSA take-up and the influence of TESSA activity and use on the practices of teachers and teacher educators; this work is funded by *The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*. The proposal was submitted jointly with the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and the funding will also facilitate development of the Teacher Education OER Africa network.
- ◆ A project designed to provide a pathway into teaching for rural women in Malawi is being funded by *The Scottish Government International Development Fund*.
- ◆ *The Waterloo Foundation* is supporting the development of TESSA OERs for secondary science teacher training in Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.
- ◆ *The Commonwealth of Learning* is funding the extension of TESSA use in primary teacher education programmes at colleges in Uganda and Zambia.

The funding of these projects and additional funding from the David and Elaine Potter Foundation and the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Trust facilitates complementary activity, both short and longer term, including:

- ◆ Strengthening of TESSA as a African-based network
- ◆ Continuing to develop partnerships in a range of West African Francophone countries
- ◆ A TESSA-OLNet (Open Learning Network) fellowship programme allowing colleagues from Sub-Saharan Africa to research into the use of OERs to support teacher education
- ◆ Developments to the TESSA website to support increased community participation and sharing of experiences and adapted materials
- ◆ Initiating and deepening relationships with a range of NGOs, international bodies and donors involved in teacher education
- ◆ Support for a small group of PhD studentships linked to TESSA activity.

