

Remarks
USAID/NAMIBIA DIRECTOR, GARY NEWTON
HANDOVER OF EQUIPMENT TO COLLEGES OF EDUCATION
15:00 – 17:00, JUNE 19 2006
WINDHOEK COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Windhoek

The American educator, Lee Shulman said: “Those who can, do. Those who understand, teach.” I would like to expand this a bit further by adding: “And those who know, teach other teachers.”

Teaching is very rewarding when you see a learner/student you have taught achieving something big in life. It must be doubly rewarding when you hear an achiever ascribing his or her success in life to the professional efforts of a teacher whom you taught (at college, for example).

A well trained teacher, who can transfer knowledge and analytical skills to learners, and motivate learners, is the most critical element in improving the quality of education.

It is well recognized today that improving the quality of education in the Basic Education system of Namibia has become a critical and urgent need.

Colleges of Education are therefore important institutions in training teachers who can significantly impact on the quality of education in Namibia. This is because the teachers of Namibia who will be teaching in the years to come will have the opportunity at these colleges to develop their knowledge, skills and practice levels so that they can effectively fulfill their responsibility to transform their learners to become productive and responsible citizens of Namibia.

The quality of education future teachers will offer to their learners is directly dependent on the quality of education they receive during their formative years at the colleges of education.

This is the reason why the US Government, under the Presidential initiative called Africa Education Initiative (AEI), provides resources specifically for pre-service teacher training. USAID-funded Basic Education Support Project. BES 3), had been fulfilling this mandate by working with the four colleges of education to contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching at these colleges.

This is the second year of USAID support for teacher education and professional development.

I am pleased that the Mississippi Consortium for International Development as AED’s partner in BES 3 project is assisting Namibia in this effort. The relationship provides a unique opportunity for teacher educators from the US to learn about teacher training in Namibia and for Namibians to get exposed to state-of-art methodologies and approaches for training teachers in the US and other places in the world.

A major concept that the USAID funded BES 3 project embraces is that of building capacity from within. The two weeks of professional dialogue we are launching today embraces that philosophy. The goal of any interventions and innovations that are introduced by projects like BES 3 should be that of adaptation to local conditions, so that the interventions become a regular feature of the local institutions.

Improving teaching practices is an ongoing endeavor that is best conducted at the local level to meet specific needs of the institutions, the teacher educators and the student teachers. NIED and the BES 3 project are working with you here at Windhoek College (and the other three colleges of education) to maximize the benefit of local expertise and at the same time provide access to concepts and methodologies being tried in other institutions of teacher training.

USAID and the Ministry of Education hope and expect that the activities of last year and those starting today will nurture the culture of continuous learning and professional development that will lead to improvements in instructional skills and practices of both teacher educators and student teachers at your institutions.

USAID not only recognizes the critical role of colleges of education in improving the quality of education but also recognize the importance of providing these institutions with necessary equipment and tools, so that the improvements in the quality of teaching will start here and then gets transferred to Namibian schools.

That is why USAID provided computers to the four colleges of education as well as to the five (5) teacher resources centers across the country under the I-NET project two years ago. Today we are handing over video equipment to the four colleges of education.

Video equipment is a uniquely useful tool in teacher training. It offers the chance to stop and go back in time so that student teachers and teacher educators can reflect on the complex and many layered elements associated with good teaching and learning. USAID is proud to be able to provide the necessary equipment.

Teachers trained at the four colleges of education will become the guides and mentors of Namibia's future leadership. Becoming a teacher is a life-long process that does not end when a student teacher receives his/her Basic Education Teachers Diploma (BETD) certification. It's only the first step in their lifelong education to master the difficult but extremely rewarding task of becoming an educator who is thoughtful, persuasive and well educated. USAID is excited to provide the equipment to make some of the next steps a reality.

We wish you success as you are working this month with MCID, NIED, and BES 3 staff on using video equipment as well as learning new methodologies and strategies to improve your own teaching and communication practices at the four colleges and guiding student teachers as they develop their skills as would-be teachers.

I thank you.