CAPACITY BUILDING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING PROJECT

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SADC REGIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY CONFERENCE HELD ON 4TH TO 8TH APRIL, 2011 AT THE SANDTON SUN HOTEL, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

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1. CONTEXT OF THE REGIONAL OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) recognize education’s pivotal role in improving economic growth and development, in alleviating poverty and in enhancing the quality of life of people. Education is central in the achievement of the SADC Vision of a common future, a future in a regional community that ensures economic well-being, improved standards of living and quality of life, freedom, social, justice, peace and security. To enable SADC Member States realize meaningfully the stated critical role of education in development, the SADC Secretariat focused on various declarations as follows:

1.1 Global and Continental Commitments to Education:
The Education For All (EFA) Goals call upon Member States to ensure that the learning needs are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. Further, the EFA Goals call for the achievement of 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) too call upon MS to ensure equal access to free quality primary and secondary education to all citizens of SADC Member States and eradicate illiteracy by 2015. The African Union Second Decade of Education on Plan of Action articulates the development of Africa’s human resources making specific reference to ODL.

1.2 Regional Policies and Strategic Frameworks:
The SADC Treaty, among other things, recognizes education and training as areas for cooperation under social and human development. The SADC Regional Indicative Strategy Development Plan (RISDP, 2000-2015) recognizes education and training as a tool for developing necessary knowledge, attitudes, skills and human capacities for social and economic development in order to promote investment and efficiency in the SADC Region. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is emphatic on issues of equal access to all forms of education and Training. The SADC Gender Policy promotes participation of women, men, girls, and boys in all education and training programmes in order to strengthen their contribution. The Protocol on Education and Training (Article 9) promotes the deployment of Open and Distance Learning in promoting quality access to education. Specifically, SADC encourages member States to:
- have national policies on ODL;
- have ODL institutions for all levels of education;
- create SADC Distance Education Centres;
- cooperate in the design, dissemination of Distance Learning materials; and
- create professional associations to facilitate exchange of ideas and experiences.

1.3 SADC Capacity Building in ODL Project:
In line with the Vision, and in conformity with the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, a Grant Agreement with the African Development Bank (ADB) was signed in 2007 to launch a SADC Capacity Building Project in ODL. The main purpose of the project is to contribute to the development and deployment of effective, harmonized Open and Distance Learning to increase access to quality education and training and support regional integration across the SADC region.
The Project has two components:

i) Component 1: ODL Regional Policy Development and Strategic Planning;

ii) Component 2: Regional Capacity Building for Open and Distance Learning.

- focus of the Project is on secondary education, higher education, teacher training, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- further, in line with the SADC Treaty and the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, the Project recognizes the need to promote gender equality and women empowerment.
- to this effect, the Project has developed a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Open and Distance learning to facilitate mainstreaming processes in all project activities.

Output for Component 1:

- An ODL Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy developed and implemented.
- Regional ODL Policy developed.
- Regional. ODL Strategic Plan and operational framework developed.

1.4 ODL Regional Policy Development Process:

In order to ensure that the process of developing the Regional Policy in ODL is evidence–based, the SADC Secretariat conducted a region-wide study of the four sectors (secondary, teacher, higher and technical vocation education and training). The results of the studies informed the process of developing the Regional Policy. The primary objective of the four-sector study was to provide the necessary cross-country comparisons critical to derive policy framework that describes the important aspects of an enabling environment for the effective deployment of harmonized ODL in the SADC region and for promoting cooperation in this area.

Following the completion of the country research reports on the four-sector study, the Policy Dialogue Forum was organized in August, 2010. Specifically it was meant to review and validate the draft country research reports on the four sectors; identify and reach consensus on the key issues and challenges that should be addressed in the proposed Regional ODL policy and make appropriate recommendations.

1.5 The Common trends that were observed in the SADC Member States:

- most of the structures of the education systems comprised seven years of primary, three years of junior secondary, two years of senior secondary and four years of university education that led to a Bachelor’s degree.
- MS had expanded their education systems in an attempt to achieve education for all (EFA) goals and increase access to education and training. Teacher education and TBET had also been expanded to provide increased training, but NOT to the same extent as the increase in primary and secondary education.
- there were many students who dropped out from the school system each year due to many reasons, such as lack of physical infrastructure at the next level, failure to pay school fees and other school needs, illness due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic and other diseases, pregnancy and early marriages etc.
• A number of MS had reached gender parity in school attendance, with a few countries having more females than males in schools, and a larger number of countries having fewer females attending and completing school. A common phenomenon for all the countries was the observed disparities between urban and rural areas, with urban areas being well off when compared to the rural areas. As a result, students in the urban areas were given an education of a higher quality and thus tended to perform at a higher level than those from the rural areas.
• There had been an increase in the provision of ODL in most MS.
• SADC governments paid a major portion of the provision of ODL, while the private sector, NGOs, faith-based Organizations/churches, international organizations, donor agencies as well as civil society paid a smaller proportion.

1.6 Identified Opportunities were:
• Demand for education exceeds the supply.
• A large proportion of poor school leavers dropped out of school because of inadequate capacity at the next levels or left school because of several problems, the majority being women and girls in most Member States.
• Needs of workers for upgrading programmes, continuous professional development and lifelong learning where abundant.
• There is increased demand for ICT.

1.7 Identified challenges were:
• Lack of national ODL policies in most of the member states;
• Perceptions that some people studying through ODL had lower quality education than those through the conventional mode;
• That the existing ODL institutions were not able to meet the demand for education in the Region;
• Lack of adequately trained, experienced and competent staff for various positions in ODL such as teaching, material designers and developers, ICT personnel, learner support services, audio-visual specialists, etc.;
• Limited collaboration/partnerships and linkages among institutions and between countries;
• Absence of a regional qualifications framework and the general lack of monitoring and evaluation in ODL;
• Inadequate physical and ICT infrastructure and networks to support teaching and learning in ODL and
• Limited funding from Governments and other funders to support ODL institutions programmes and courses.

On the basis of these opportunities and challenges, a Regional ODL Policy was formulated. This Regional ODL Policy Conference is therefore being convened to review and validate this draft policy, whose implementation will enhance ODL partnership, harmonization, coordination among MS and consequently contribute to enhanced education acquisition in the SADC Region.
1.8 **Rationale for the Regional ODL Policy:**

- the Protocol on Education and Training provides for areas of cooperation in various areas such as policy for education and training, distance education, lifelong education and training.
- however, despite this, only three MS have National ODL Policies. Lack of national ODL policies implies that there is limited coordination among the various stakeholders in the implementation of ODL programmes in most SADC Member States.
- the challenges that have been identified above, both those that negatively affect access to education and training in general and those that relate to delivery of ODL specifically can only be effectively addressed through the development of a Regional ODL Policy Framework.
- the Regional ODL Policy will therefore enhance integration, harmonization and maximize utilization of resources in line with the Protocol on Education and Training, thus, promoting the development and deployment of effective, efficient and harmonized ODL in the SADC region.

1.9 **Key Issues to be Addressed by the Regional Policy:**

From the four-sector studies, the following key issues were agreed upon during the Policy Dialogue Forum August, 2011:

- increasing access and mainstreaming ODL into the education system.
- counteracting the negative perceptions of ODL.
- developing national ODL policies and instituting ODL units in SADC member states.
- promoting collaboration, and partnership and networks between institutions and among member states.
- having in place regional qualifications framework, regional quality assurance systems, regional multi-media and ICT centre and regional centres of excellence.
- promoting capacity building of ODL staff.
- addressing issues of gender and HIV and AIDS.
- streaming ODL funding and budgeting.
- adopting user-friendly curriculum to be delivered in an ODL philosophy.
- encouraging, promoting and supporting research development and dissemination of the results to support ODL practice.
2. METHODOLOGY:

In order to conduct the Regional ODL Policy Conference efficiently, a set of approaches were devised. These include:

- registration of participants
- clarification of the programme
- identification of the Conference purpose and objectives
- specification of the Conference methods and
- identification of the deliverables.

2.1 Registration of Participants:
Right from Day One and as the first event, the Conference participants were asked to register themselves, a task which was supervised by the SADC Secretariat. The number of these participants were 152 classified by country and or by function as follows: Angola (4); Botswana (5); DRC (8); Lesotho (6); Malawi (19); Mozambique (18); Namibia (3); South Africa (3); Swaziland (1); Tanzania (18); Zambia (14); Zimbabwe (19); SADC Consultants (2); and SADC Secretariat, interpreters/ translators (32). The list of these participants is attached.

2.2 Endorsement of the Conference Programme:
Mrs. C. Chakwana, the SADC Gender expert, walked through the Programme of the week. Whereas Day One had its thrust on the Opening Address, background information and presentation of the Draft Regional Policy, Day Two and Three were essentially for group discussions of the referred to policy. Day Four was dominated by presentations of group work on how the policy draft could be improved. The last day witnessed adoption of key policy areas, evaluation of the conference, closing remarks and the way forward.

2.3 Conference Purpose and Objectives:
It was explained by Mrs. Chakwana that the overall Conference purpose was to critically review validate and build consensus on the draft Regional ODL Policy. Specifically, the conference objectives were to:

- review the draft Regional ODL Policy;
- validate the draft Regional ODL Policy;
- build consensus on the key Policy Focus Areas;
- build consensus on the implementation arrangements and monitoring cum evaluation mechanisms.

2.4 Conference Methods:
The organizational dimension of the Conference applied a multi-method approach, covering presentations, group discussions and plenary sessions.

2.5 Conference outputs:

- regional ODL Policy reviewed;
- draft Regional ODL Policy validated;
- consensus built on Key Policy Focus Areas;
• consensus built on the implementation arrangements and monitoring as well as evaluation mechanisms.

3. CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

3.1 Day One Deliberations:
On this first day of the Conference, four key presentations, constituting the backbone of the Conference, were made as indicated in 3.1.2 – 3.1.5 hereunder:

3.1.1 Introductory Remarks:
Welcome Remarks by the Chairperson, Dr. Mowes:
In her welcome remarks, the Chairperson, Dr. Mowes stressed the importance of ODL in improving human capital in the education sector. The Chairperson also noted that the actualization of MDGs and EFA Goals would not be possible if the human capital remains unattended. She applauded the ADB FUND for supporting the SADC ODL Project. Furthermore, she reiterated the importance of the regional ODL policy in providing a harmonized and coordinated regulatory framework for education in the region. Therefore, she commended member states for their continued support towards the Project by actively participating in the current policy review conference. She finally introduced the consultants for the ODL Regional Policy and the one for the Regional Strategic Plan. These remarks were followed by participant self – introductions.

3.1.2 Keynote Address by Dr. Primrose Kurasha:
Dr. Primrose Kurasha stated that the Vision of SADC is to improve economic growth and development, alleviate poverty, and enhance the quality of life of the people of the Region. Owing to the above Vision, she noted that SADC requires instrument to enhance human capabilities and to achieve the desired objectives of socio and economic development. She also said that SADC Region is faced with the challenge of achieving “Education for All” as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on universal primary education, poverty alleviation and gender equality by 2015.

She added that gender inequality and poverty are two main obstacles to women development in the MS. To this effect, ODL must have a visible impact on poverty reduction among women, gender equity, and economic sustainability.

(a) Key References:
The Guest of Honor further stated that the strategic context for the Regional ODL Policy is largely informed by the following SADC foundational policy documents:
• The SADC Protocol on Education and Training, SADC Secretariat, 2004
• SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, SADC Secretariat, 2008
• SADC Gender Policy
• The SADC Treaty
• SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
• The Information Education and Communication Strategy
• The African Union Second Decade of Education Plan of Action
• The SADC Capacity Building Project and
• The SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training.
She, therefore, said the purpose of the Conference was “to review and validate vital information required to develop national policies and strategies for promoting ODL through education and training”.

(b) **Definition of ODL Policy:**
The Guest of Honour borrowed Hanekom and Thornhill (1983) definition of a policy as *a guideline to action* referring policy both at an organisation (micro) level and at the National (macro) level. She noted that most of the institutions are public organizations adding that at the national level, policy becomes a *public policy*. In other words, it is formulated and enunciated by the state rather than by individuals. To this effect, she said as a Region, public policy refers to the positions and actions that are taken by SADC as the over-riding authority in the operations, beyond the narrow confines of each individual state.

In addition, the Guest of Honour stressed that educational policy falls within the realm of public policy as it is concerned with providing social services which focus on developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for the development of the Region. Therefore, she concluded that the conference aimed at formulating an ODL policy in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and other related policy documents already stated.

(c) **Rationale for SADC ODL Policy:**
Among others, the Guest of Honour said that the global environment has had several forces that should be considered in coming up with the ODL policy. These include but are not limited to the following:

- the rise of the ‘network’ society, driven by technological innovation and the increasing strategic importance of information, as symbolised by the expansion of the Internet.
- the restructuring of the economic world system, with the transformation to a post-industrial knowledge economy, the emergence of newly industrialised nations, and the growth of new forms of dependency in the developing world.
- the growing real but also virtual mobility of people, capital and knowledge.

The other dimension to call for a Regional Policy is the regional environment consideration. She noted that ODL mode has been functioning in the SADC Region for over a century in the four sectors of education and training under consideration. Many graduates have been produced by these institutions, and they have made tremendous contributions to the development of their nations. This demonstrates the extent to which their qualifications were recognized in their nations. On this note, she stressed the need for the Member States to be educated to appreciate the reality that the ODL mode is a valid mode of teaching and learning in its own right and not to be compared to any.

She further stated that a Regional ODL policy would *ensure such issues as credit transfer by learners from one institution to the other across the regional educational institutions are effected*. This calls for a Regional *Qualifications Framework* which would be part of the Regional ODL policy.

(d) **Key Issues in ODL:**
There are several critical issues to consider when developing a policy particularly in a multi state and multi disciplinary context. She, however, singled out five key factors, namely:

- **The historical background of the environmental context:**
  This policy environment is important to consider because it influences both the development and the deployment of the policy. For example the ODL policy is being developed in a region where there is inadequate access to education and also a region that is seeking improved economic growth and development, poverty alleviation and the enhancement of quality of life of its population.

- **The Purpose of the policy:**
  The Regional SADC ODL Policy is purposed at “enhancing accessibility, increasing relevance and ensuring high quality learning outcomes within the education four sub-sectors of Secondary, Teacher, Vocational cum Technical and Higher Education” (Draft Regional Policy Doc.). The purpose of adopting ODL as a policy option is ostensibly to increase access to education in an equitable way especially by non-traditional learners.

- **The policy must ensure Regional Integration:**
  Given the disparities in educational systems which are a function of the member states’ environments, the ODL policy has to bring harmonization of ODL in the Region. With a regionally integrated policy, access to education and training is increased, issues of gender equality are addressed, equitable access to education at all the four levels is increased and the relevance and quality of the education is enhanced.

- **Research and Scholarship on ODL:**
  The development of ODL must be informed through sound research and scholarship. Sound research and scholarship in ODL development helps to inform the processes and creates a supportive environment to facilitate the operationalisation of the ODL policy. Through research, mechanisms of ensuring the sustainability of the ODL in the Region beyond the life of the project can also be identified and articulated.

- **Capacity Building:**
  The ODL policy cannot be efficiently operationalised without appropriate and adequate capacity building. This makes capacity building another very critical issue to consider in policy development. This calls for the need to rationalize resource allocation and standardize processes and procedures while ensuring manpower training specifically in ODL.

(e) **Way Forward:**
The way forward should be driven by the draft vision of the SADC ODL Regional Policy which is “A region where men and women, boys and girls have seamless, equitable access to lifelong learning through the provision of gender sensitive, quality and relevant open and distance learning programmes”. The draft mission statement further directs the way with more precision “To support integration, harmonization
and maximization of resources and regional standardization of both quality and outputs of ODL provision in the SADC Region.” The draft policy goes further to recommend 11 key policy focus areas around which the Regional ODL policy is supposed to focus while adhering to the standard ODL delivery guiding principles. These are flexibility, learner-centeredness, quality and relevance, cost effectiveness, collaboration and partnership, efficiency, equality and non-discrimination and harmonization and standardization.

The implementation framework of the ODL Policy should be mindful of the following key issues:
- key players in the implementation process and their specific roles.
- policy operational structures.
- monitoring and evaluation.

(f) Conclusion:
The Guest of Honour reiterated the need for a clear policy/guideline to action. A clear Regional ODL policy is essential given the diversity between and among member states. A Regional Policy will serve to harmonise and standardize the activities of ODL institutions at the Secondary, Teacher training, TVET and Higher education levels for the good of the learners.

3.1.3 Background to the Regional ODL Policy: Mr. Thulaganyo Thutoetsile:
The presenter gave a historical trajectory to the development of the current draft regional ODL policy as follows:

(a) Recognition of Education as Key to Improving Economic Development: SADC views education as a means of alleviating poverty and enhancing the quality of life of people in the region. The presenter further stated that in line with the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, and the SADC Treaty and the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, a Grant Agreement with the African Development Bank (ADB) was signed in 2007 to launch a SADC Capacity Building Project in ODL.

(b) Region-wide Study: as a prelude to the development of the regional policy, the SADC Secretariat conducted a region-wide study of the four sectors (secondary, teacher, higher, and technical vocation education and training). The primary objective of the four-sector study was to provide the necessary cross-country comparisons critical to derive policy framework that describes the important aspects of an enabling environment for the effective deployment of harmonized ODL in the SADC region and for promoting cooperation in this area.

(c) The Policy Dialogue Forum: the forum was organized specifically to review and validate the draft country research reports on the four sectors, and to identify and reach consensus on the key issues and challenges that should be addressed in the proposed regional ODL policy and make appropriate recommendations. The presenter stated that delegates to the forum identified common trends from the country research reports.

(d) The Common Trends in the SADC Member States: These are high drop outs rates especially for females, disparities between urban and rural areas, with urban areas being well off when compared to the rural areas; an increase in the provision of ODL
and SADC governments paying a major portion of the provision of ODL, with the private sector, NGOs, faith based organizations/churches, international organizations, donor agencies as well as civil society paying a smaller portion.

(e) **Opportunities:** They are high demand for education, need for upgrading programmes for workers, and proliferation of new IGs.

(f) **Challenges:** Lack of national ODL policies in most of the member states; general poor perceptions of the public to ODL and lack of adequately trained, experienced and competent staff for various positions in ODL were seen as most salient.

(g) **SADC ODL Regional Policy Conference:** the presenter explained that the current conference is to review and validate the developed Regional ODL Policy.

3.1.4 **The Policy Context by Mrs. Christobel Chakwana:**

(a) **Background:** The presenter explained the policy context background from two perspectives as follows:

*Global and Continental Commitments to education:* The commitment for promoting learning needs are included in the:
- Education For All (EFA)
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that call upon Member States to eradicate Illiteracy by 2015.
- The African Union Second Decade of Education on Plan of Action

*Regional Policies and Strategic Frameworks:* the presenter explained on regional policies and treaties that recognize education and training as areas for cooperation under social and human development. The policies are:
- The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development
- The SADC Gender Policy
- The Protocol on Education and Training (Article 9) that promotes the use of Open and Distance Learning in improving quality access to education.

(b) **General Education and Training Challenges:**
The presenter stated the general challenge in education and training as disproportional expansion of education at primary level to that of secondary and higher education levels.

(c) **Challenges to ODL Delivery:**
The presenter stated the challenges that were revealed through the Four Sector Study that was conducted in 12 SADC Member States. The challenges include the following:
- lack of national ODL policies
- negative perceptions towards ODL
- inadequate mainstreaming of cross cutting issues such as gender and HIV and AIDS
- Lack of adequately trained, experienced and competent staff for various positions in ODL.
- limited collaboration/partnerships and linkages among institutions and between countries
• absence of a regional qualifications framework and the general lack of monitoring and evaluation in ODL
• Inadequate physical and ICT infrastructure
• Limited funding from Governments and other funders

(d) SADC Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning Project:
• From the background of the challenges, the presenter stated that a SADC Capacity Building ODL Project was launched in 2007 with the aim of contributing to the development and deployment of ODL in SADC Region.
• The Project has two components, namely, the Regional ODL Policy Development and Strategic Planning and Regional Capacity Building for ODL.

(e) Rationale for the Regional ODL Policy:
• The presenter explained that the Protocol on Education and Training provides for areas of cooperation in various areas such as, policy for education and training, distance education, lifelong.
• Thus, the Regional ODL Policy will enhance integration, harmonization and maximize utilization of resources in line with the Protocol on Education and Training, thereby promoting the development and deployment of effective, efficient and harmonized ODL in the SADC region.

(f) Key Issues to be addressed by the Policy:
The presenter explained the key issues of the policy that were agreed upon during the Policy Dialogue Forum. Some of the issues are:
• increase in access and mainstreaming ODL into the education system.
• development of national ODL policies and instituting ODL units in SADC member states.
• promotion of collaboration partnership and networks between institutions and among member states.
• streamlining of ODL funding and budgeting.
• adoption of user-friendly and gender sensitive curricula.

3.1.5 Draft Regional ODL Policy by Dr. F. Mukyanuzi:
Dr F Mukyanuzi presented the Draft Regional Policy. He outlined the methodology used to develop the policy, then explained the Policy's vision and mission. He proceeded to present the 11 Key policy focus areas namely:
1. ODL Policy frameworks
2. Governance and Management
3. Public Acceptance of ODL
4. Access
5. Curriculum
6. Regulating ODL Quality
7. Monitoring and Research
8. Accreditation and Certification
9. Collaboration, networking and partnership
10. Funding and Budgeting
11. Cross Cutting Issues
For each Key policy focus area, the problem within that domain was outlined and justified. This then led to the policy statement for the focus area and finally several objectives emanating from the policy statement.

He finally explained the implementation framework, where he outlined the various functions assigned to various entities for the implementation of the policy.

The Chair-person then opened the floor for comments and questions: The following were raised by the delegates as follows:

- the policy needs to consider lack of electricity in many of our countries where about 20% of our populations have access to electricity.
- the policy is a good one as it will provide a shared regional vision and mission for all member countries.
- low acceptance of ODL is being emphasised in the policy – perhaps the focus should simply shift to advocacy for ODL as in some countries people have accepted ODL by choice.
- there is a need for a close look at accreditation and certification.
- there is a need to get the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) completed. This has been a long standing issue within SADC.
- it should be noted that the Qualifications Frameworks are the same for ODL and conventional learning. Therefore the ongoing QF exercise should be expedited and our ODL policy should focus more on quality of ODL.
- the policy needs to state the roles which students, civil society and media can play in the implementation of this policy. Civil society and media could contribute a lot in the advocacy for ODL.
- research and Development problems in the SADC region are not unique to ODL but cut across the conventional education system.
- there is a need for consistency in the policy document. We need to ensure that the policy statement is consistently supported by the preceding write ups on the issue and the justification.
- does the policy need to look at the NQF as there already exists another SADC initiative on the NQF?
- the ODL policy has significant emphasis on gender main-streaming – however, there is an existing SADC initiative on gender issues and there is no need for overlap as ODL is a big issue by itself.

In response, it was noted that many of the issues raised were valid concerns and during the course of this week, we need to refine the document to meet our needs. It was also highlighted that most of the issues involve various departments and other sectors of SADC and Governments of which our policy cannot fully address. It was also stated that the Ministers want to see movement with ODL so there is goodwill for progress.

3.2 Days Two and Three Deliberations:

During these two days, the Conference participants were making discussions in groups. There were five groups. According to the guidelines that had been issued on the criterion for forming group discussions, each participant initially indicated her/his area of interest/specialization,
which signaled the group to which she/he was to belong. These groups with their respective areas of foci were as follows:

- Group 1 was assigned *Policy Frameworks and Governance and Management*.
- Group 2 handled *Regulation of ODL Quality, Accreditation and Monitoring* as well as Research.
- Group 3 was given *collaboration cum partnership and cross cutting issues*.
- Group 4 dealt with *access and funding cum budgeting*.
- Group 5 did *ODL public acceptance and curriculum*.

Before starting their work, the five groups were given specific instructions to be complied with during their deliberations. First they were to choose their respective Chairpersons and rapporteurs. Then they were all to review chapters 1, 2 and 4 of the policy draft and suggest areas for improvement.

Regarding Chapter 3, which was the central and core area for concentration, all the groups were required to first assess the eleven key policy areas, to see which ones were not relevant and therefore could be dropped; which ones could be added; which ones could be retained albeit with some amendments and which ones could be adopted as they were.

After this initial task; each group was then to confine itself to its assigned area as already stated. The specific guidelines to be observed were whether:

- the assignment policy focus areas were really policy focus areas;
- the policy areas were adequately clear and properly phrased;
- the issues, their justification, their corresponding policy statements and objectives had coherence and consistency.

3.3 *Proceedings for Day 4:*

On the fourth day of the Conference, deliberations were as sketched hereunder:

3.3.1 **Introduction of the new Chairperson - Heroldt Murang - by Project Coordinator:**

The Project Coordinator, Thulanganyo Thutoetsile introduced the new Chairperson, Mr. Heroldt Murang. He noted that the Chair person Conference, Dr. Mowes, was ill and was not able to attend the conference and therefore Heroldt Murang replaced her. As part of the introductory remarks, the Project coordinator informed the delegates that Mozambique was celebrating the National Women’s day and were invited to join Mozambique regarding that celebration. Furthermore, he then gave the floor to Mr. António Franque, from Mozambique who spoke about the date.

Before calling the groups to make their presentations, the Chairperson reminded delegates that it had been agreed before that chapters 1 and 2 were not for presentation. However comments and recommendations on them could be made. Presentations therefore were to be made on chapters 3 and 4. The Chairperson then informed that each group would have one hour for the presentation including comments and observations.

Just to note, during the plenary session, the Chairperson asked the delegates to congratulate Mr. João Cristovão Diogo Cafuquena who was turning 45 years old.
### 3.3.2 Presentations of Group Work:

**Group 1: ODL Policy Framework, Governance and Management**  

(a) **ODL Policy Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.7.1</td>
<td>ODL Policy Frameworks</td>
<td>National ODL Policy Frameworks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Issue**  
Policy frameworks in most of the SADC Member States comprise ODL statements which do not provide solid framework to support the development of this important mode of education and training delivery.

Most of the SADC Member States lack comprehensive policy framework to support and guide the development of ODL.

**Issue Justification**  
Because of lack of relevant policy frameworks, the use of ODL has not always been properly coordinated with other efforts such as the provision of adequate resources and the development of adequate supporting infrastructures. The existence of a policy framework underscores a government’s commitment to ODL and allows for the marshalling of resources needed to support and accelerate the provision of ODL programmes. Solid policy frameworks are needed for guiding, supporting and regulating the development and delivery of ODL in both public and private institutions.

A clear ODL policy at national level is a necessary condition for creating an enabling environment and for supporting the development of institutional ODL policies. It is becoming clear from relevant literature and international practice that where there are clear and unambiguous policy directives managing the application of Open and Distance Learning, sustainability and success have been remarkable and where these did not exist, disappointments have been evident. In this context, the SADC Protocol on Education and Training highlights the need for Member States to formulate national policies on Distance Education in order to provide a framework for cooperation at the regional level.

National Policies in most of the SADC Member States comprise ODL statements which do not provide solid operational framework to support the development of this important mode of education and training delivery; Reference should be made to the four sector study reports by Member States to inform the justification i.e. evidence/statistics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy statement</th>
<th>Member States shall create enabling policy environments that promote the development and effective implementation of Open and Distance Learning programmes, ensure that ODL is a national and integral initiative which contributes to national development and merits allocation of appropriate human and financial resources.</th>
<th>Member States shall create enabling policy environments that promote and support the development and effective implementation of Open and Distance Learning programmes; Member States shall ensure that ODL is an integrated programme which contributes to national development and merits allocation of appropriate resources.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To integrate Open and Distance Learning into the national education and training systems through national policies  
• To provide ODL with the necessary political support that reflects government commitment to its development  
• To provide frameworks for allocating sufficient human and financial resources to ODL institutions and their respective programmes.  
• To encourage the development of national ODL policies that are linked to other relevant national policies and take cognizance of relevant regional, continental and global commitments to education and training in general and Open and Distance Learning in particular.  
• To encourage and support the development of national and institutional ODL policies and their respective strategic plans | Member States shall:  
• Integrate Open and Distance Learning into the national education and training systems through national policies  
• Encourage the development of ODL policies that are linked to other relevant national policies and are in line with regional, continental and global commitments to education and training in general and Open and Distance Learning in particular.  
• Provide necessary political support that reflects governments’ commitment to ODL development  
• Provide mechanisms for allocating sufficient human, infrastructural and financial resources to ODL institutions and their respective programmes. |

| Implementation Strategies | Integration of ODL  
*Policy review and revision (including curriculum review)*  
*Advocacy and sensitization*  
*Establishment of ODL structures within relevant ministries*  
*Encourage the development of ODL policies*  
*Research and innovations*  
*Policy review*  
*National and regional consultations*  
*Advocacy and sensitization* | Provide necessary political support that reflects governments’ commitment to ODL development  
*Lobbying and advocacy*  
*Enactment of supporting laws*  
*Publicity and national consensus*  
*Provide mechanisms for allocating sufficient human, infrastructural and financial resources to ODL institutions* |
Building networks with regional, continental and global structures

- Encourage and support the development of institutional policies guided by their respective national strategic plans
  - Capacity building for ODL practitioners
  - Research and innovations
  - Advocacy and sensitization
  - Consultations and benchmarking
  - Lobbying and advocacy
  - Capacity building for ODL
  - Institutional strategic and business plans
  - Resource mobilization

(b) ODL Governance and Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.2</th>
<th>Governance and Management</th>
<th>ODL Governance and Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>The governance structures and management systems of most of the ODL institutions in the Region do not sufficiently facilitate rapid response to the emerging needs of learners, particularly because institutions lack the necessary human resource capacity.</td>
<td>Most Member States have weak governance structures and management systems, and lack the necessary human resource capacity to manage the development and delivery of ODL programmes. Basis: Issue lacked clarity and not in sink with the theme, policy objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>One of the inherent advantages of ODL, is that it can provide flexibility, which enables institutions to respond quickly to market demands. Most of the ODL programmes are either part of conventional institutions or line Ministries, that is, government departments, whose governance structures and associated bureaucratic procedures do not provide sufficient autonomy to respond quickly to emerging needs of potential and current learners and society, in terms of developing and approving new and relevant programmes of study and curricula. Studies have shown that the management systems of ODL institutions are largely determined by the governance, organizational structures and regulations of their parent Ministries. These do not take</td>
<td>The governance structures and management systems of most of the ODL institutions in the Region do not sufficiently facilitate rapid response to the emerging needs of learners. Other considerations Reference should be made to the four sector study reports by Member States to inform the justification i.e. evidence/statistics Serious recast of the section ---- this applies to all issue justifications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other considerations
Reference should be made to the four sector study reports by Member States to inform the justification i.e. evidence/statistics
Serious recast of the section ---- this applies to all issue justifications.
into account the unique requirements of distance learning programmes, particularly in terms of human resource development. Therefore ODL institutions are unable to maintain both the quantity and quality of their services and efficiency of their operations. In order to be successful, ODL institutions need well-qualified and experienced teams to plan and manage implementation of programmes, right from the beginning. Unfortunately there is shortage of qualified staff for guiding and influencing the development of distance education policies and for planning, managing and evaluating distance education programmes, in Member States. As a consequence, many of the staff engaged in ODL are either not trained or have inadequate training in ODL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy statement</th>
<th>Member States shall strengthen the capacities of ODL institutions to deliver their courses through appropriate governance structures and effective management systems.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To enhance the capacity of ODL institutions through relevant, responsive and efficient governance and organizational structures  
                      • To provide adequate and effective administrative and management support to programmes.  
                      • To develop human resource capacity to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate ODL programmes |
|                  | Member States shall:  
                      • Enhance the effectiveness of ODL institutions through relevant, responsive and efficient governance structures and management systems  
                      • Provide adequate administrative and management support for effective delivery of ODL programmes.  
                      • Develop human resource capacity to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate ODL programmes |
### Implementation Strategies

- **Enhance the effectiveness of ODL institutions through relevant, responsive and efficient governance structures and management systems**
  - National and institutional audits
  - Effective EMIS
  - National coordination structures
  - Capacity building

- **Provide adequate administrative and management support for effective delivery of ODL programmes**
  - National and institutional audits
  - Effective EMIS
  - National coordination structures

- **Develop human resource capacity to plan, research, develop, deliver and evaluate ODL programmes**
  - Continuing professional development and training
  - Effective EMIS
  - Recruitment

### Additional Policy Focus Area

**Training and development**

*Basis:* Owing to limited human capital to take forward the agenda

### Group 2: Regulating ODL Quality, Monitoring and Research, Research and Development and Regional Qualifications Framework

#### Regulating ODL Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.6</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue 3.7.6.1</td>
<td>3.7.6.1 Quality Assurance</td>
<td>3.7.6.1 Quality Assurance Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality concerns in ODL programme development and delivery</td>
<td>The issue justification needs to be rephrased to allude to specific issues of quality institutions face (development of materials, delivery, learner support services). The four sector studies could help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td>There shall be a Regional Quality Assurance system to monitor and evaluate the standards of ODL provision in the SADC region.</td>
<td>There shall be a regional quality assurance framework to promote the monitoring and evaluation of quality in ODL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To develop a Regional quality assurance framework to regulate the standards of ODL institutions.  
• To facilitate interstate mobility of learners, academic staff, researchers and resources.  
• To monitor quality performance of | • Replace regulate by promote  
• Remove the statement to 3.7.8 about accreditation and certification. |
### (b) Monitoring and Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.7</th>
<th>Monitoring and Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Tracking of indicators in the SADC Member States is not standardized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>Each SADC member state, following its own ODL policy tends to plan how best to promote ODL activities using its own indicators. However, such activities need to be regularly shared among the member states and the standard of performance compared. In the process, reporting on implementation across the member states will offer an opportunity for each member state to examine what others will have done concerning ODL and consequently doing formative work. All these activities, will obviously need a coordinating strong body at the regional level for monitoring, evaluation and providing professional advice to member states and to the SADC Secretariat on how ODL implementation should professionally be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed statement by group</td>
<td>Measuring and reporting on ODL progress in member states has been a challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td>SADC member states shall institute a Regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to track regional and national indicators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To track regional progress on the provision of ODL  
• To facilitate information sharing among member states on the development and deployment of ODL. |
| SADC member states shall domesticate the regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. |
| Expected outcomes | • The first objective should be to adopt and adapt the framework.  
• Replace to track by to assess… |

### (c) Research and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.7.2</th>
<th>Research Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>ODL-related research and its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed statement by group</td>
<td>There is limited research,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**dissemination is not adequately supported by SADC member states.**

**Issue Justification**

In the 2006 SADC study, it was reported that ODL-related research is not only scanty in comparison with research in conventional learning, but is also less encouraged and supported in terms of conduct and dissemination. When research processes are poorly effected, it means the populace cannot learn enough about ODL. Dissemination of ODL research transcends national boundaries here so consumers within the SADC region need information sharing fora to be able to appreciate each others’ work. Moreover, such research activities in the Region need to be jointly carried out for maximum use of available capacities and physical resources.

When research processes are poorly effected, it means the populace cannot learn enough about ODL. Dissemination of ODL research transcends national boundaries here so consumers within the SADC region need information sharing fora to be able to appreciate each others’ work. Moreover, such research activities in the Region need to be jointly carried out for maximum use of available capacities and physical resources.

**Policy statement**

*SADC member states shall support ODL-related research in terms of conducting it and disseminating its findings within and among these countries.*

*SADC member states shall invest in ODL research and development.*

**Policy objectives**

- To enhance support to ODL related research among SADC member states
- To facilitate a coordinated and harmonized approach to ODL research
- To explore how each member state research can be a source for informed decision at the regional level.

- Promote and support ODL...
- no changes
- To document and disseminate research outputs in ODL, using various means and forums.
- To allocate funds for ODL research and development.

**Regional Qualifications Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.7.7.2</td>
<td>Research Development</td>
<td>Research Development and Dissemination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>There is no Regional Body to regulate national qualifications acquired by SADC members within the member states</td>
<td>There is no Regional Qualifications Framework to facilitate harmonization/alignment of qualifications offered by institutions in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>SADC member states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each SADC member state has a set of ODL qualifications that though recognized nationally, they are not equally recognized at the regional level. The problem in this regard is that each member state has its own system of certification which cannot automatically be accepted by another country without having a clear base for comparison. This problem emanates from the fact that comparability of interstate qualifications is yet to be based on well known criteria.</td>
<td>Each SADC member state has a set of ODL qualifications that though recognized nationally, they are not equally recognized at the regional level. The problem in this regard is that each member state has its own system of certification which cannot automatically be accepted by another country without having a clear base for comparison. This problem emanates from the fact that comparability of interstate qualifications is yet to be based on well known criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td>There shall be created a Regional Qualifications Mechanism for recognizing and approving inter member state awards and credentials at various ODL levels.</td>
<td>There shall be a Regional Qualifications Framework to facilitate credit recognition, articulation and transfer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To have an ODL system within SADC member states that will lead to required use of the academic credentials awarded in the various countries  
• (To have a system within the SADC member states which recognizes equivalence of academic awards/credentials offered through the ODL Mode  
• To motivate SADC member states to offer through the ODL mode the type of education and training that will easily be compared with what will have been offered in other member states. | To develop a system which facilitates recognition of educational and training credentials awarded by various institutions within SADC region, whether by face to face or by ODL. |
### Group 3: Collaboration, Networking and Partnership

**Cross Cutting Issues (HIV/AIDS)**

**Gender Mainstreaming**

(a) **Collaboration, Networking and Partnership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.9</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Although there has been collaboration and partnership among SADC member states in the management of ODL, this has involved relatively few countries and non-government institutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>While SADC member states are currently trying their best to implement ODL given its role in development, these, however, are not equally endowed in terms of resources, be they human, financial, material etc. In terms of human resources, some have had longer experience in implementing the mode (Swaziland, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Malawi), than others…</td>
<td>• Zimbabwe to be included in the list of countries with a long history of ODL. • In some member states collaboration efforts and counter part support has been limited in sectors such as teacher education, technical and vocational education and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td><strong>Mechanisms to promote collaboration, partnership and networking among SADC member states and with the world of business and industry for promotion of ODL provision, shall be created and supported.</strong></td>
<td>** Adopted as presented in the policy document**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy objectives</td>
<td>• To ensure that Member states implement programmes and activities for which they have comparative advantage in order to reduce duplication and enhance efficiency; • To ensure that the limited resources are efficiently and effectively utilized within the member states; • To enhance information sharing among SADC member states on the one hand and with the world of</td>
<td><strong>Additional Objective</strong> To mobilize and strengthen stakeholder support for ODL provision in SADC member states and beyond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote a multi-sectoral approach to ODL in member states</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create synergies and facilitate student and teacher exchange programmes at national and regional levels.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote exchange of information and resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Institute regional and national committees to oversee the implementation of ODL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage involvement of different stakeholders in ODL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthen advocacy for ODL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (b) Cross Cutting Issues, HIV/AIDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.11</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS has had devastating effects on the population by reducing enrolment and attendance as well as the teaching force and resulting into an ever increasing number of orphaned and vulnerable children who have been left without well planned education and training support.</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS has had devastating effects on the provision of ODL in the SADC region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>In most member states enrolment at all levels has been affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, rendering the youth to fail acquiring education and training which is so critical in their social, economic and political life. Even those who have been enrolled, their attendance has not been regular, resulting into limited learning and acquisition of half-baked education. Worse still, the pandemic has gradually led to an ever increasing number of orphaned and vulnerable children who, apart from remaining semi-illiterate, have little hope in the equity arrangements by member states. On the part of teachers, HIV/AIDS has reduced their life expectancy, leading to teacher shortages and or high teacher pupil ratios thereby exerting high demand for this type of personnel. ODL as a mode learning would help to narrow and mitigate the negative effects of HIV/AIDS.</td>
<td>In most member states educational enrolments and attendances at all levels have been affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, making the learners fail to acquire education and training which is so critical in their social, economic and political life. Worse still, the pandemic has led to an ever increasing number of orphaned and vulnerable children who, apart from remaining semi-illiterate, have little hope in the equity arrangements by member states. On the part of teachers, HIV/AIDS has reduced their life expectancy, leading to teacher shortages and or high teacher pupil ratios thereby exerting high demand for this type of personnel. ODL as a mode learning would help to narrow and mitigate the negative effects of HIV/AIDS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
it is, governments in member states, through the conventional education and training mode, have not managed to narrow this widening gap.

Policy statement

The SADC Regional office shall improve the management of ODL through the identification of key issues that address the marginalized groups.

Policy objectives

- To bring to light pressing issues facing the disadvantaged groups
- To make ODL policies and practice in the SADC Regional be responsive to the needs of the marginalized groups both HIV affected and infected groups.
- To reduce disparities between rural and urban geographical areas

Moved all except one objective to the relevant sub sections (Gender, ESD & Disadvantaged Groups).

- To promote ODL policies and practices that are responsive to HIV/AIDS.
- To mainstream HIV/AIDS issues in ODL programmes and activities
- To enhance the state of preparedness for HIV/AIDS in SADC member states

STRATEGIES

- Encourage multi-sectoral approaches to HIV/AIDS
- Mainstream HIV/AIDS awareness issues in ODL programmes encourage proactive approaches to mitigate HIV/AIDS
- Promote the inclusion of updated approaches to address HIV/AIDS in the curricula and teaching methodologies

(c) Gender Mainstreaming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.11.2</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>ODL programmes practically in all the member states are yet to take into consideration the various dimensions of gender especially in terms of promoting a gender sensitive non-formal education and Open and Distance Learning programmes.</td>
<td>ODL programmes in most member states are yet to take into consideration the various dimensions of gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>Adopted with minor changes which include limited ODL programmes that target social institutions such as families and religious organizations and practices which tend to promote gender inequality in some cases.</td>
<td>Adopted as presented in the document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Member States shall promote participation of women, men, girls and boys in all ODL education and
training programmes to strengthen their contribution to and benefit from regional and national education development agendas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy objectives</th>
<th>Developed as presented in the document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To promote gender equality in ODL policies, systems, and programmes in order to specifically address female-related constraints including gender stereotypes in education, gender based violence and sexual violence among others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To facilitate mainstreaming of gender in ODL systems with a view to effectively deal with specific problems that constrain women and girl child and in some cases the boy child education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To facilitate gender mainstreaming through affirmative actions with a view to ensuring that the ODL system promote female education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STRATEGIES**

- Mainstream gender in ODL policies and programmes
- Integrate gender sensitivity in the design of curricula, methodology and teaching-learning materials
- Promote gender affirmative action in ODL
- Create awareness and advocate gender issues for ODL among all stakeholders
- Create a budget for gender mainstreaming in ODL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 4: Access, Funding and Budgeting</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficiency of ODL capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title 3.7.4.1</strong></td>
<td>Demand for ODL programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
<td>ODL institutions are not able to meet the demand for programmes and courses due to their insufficient capacity.</td>
<td>The statement on demand of ODL should come in line with the public awareness creation to make potential beneficiaries perceive it as positively as they do for the conventional education system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue Justification</strong></td>
<td>ODL is increasingly becoming popular world – wide because of the advantages it offers, which include wider access, outreach and cost-effectiveness, potential for democratization of educational opportunities, opportunities for life long and continuing education and relaxed entry qualifications and</td>
<td>The issue of admission rigidities should be transferred from this part to the part about challenges/problems. The justification part should end up at “…one’s pace and convenience”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25
provision for learning at **one's own pace** and **convenience**…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy statement</th>
<th>Member States shall facilitate increased access to education at all levels and training systems as a means of developing lifelong learning for young people and adults</th>
<th>Member States shall facilitate increased access to education and training through ODL at all levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy objectives</td>
<td>• To widen access to ODL programmes through policy frameworks and mechanisms that accommodate credit accumulation, credit transfer, and recognition of prior learning between institutions and between the countries in the region; • To make greater use of ICT for efficient logistics in the delivery of courses; • To increase the breadth and equality of access through the use of appropriate media and instructional resources that address the challenges of providing education and training to the poor, girls and women, people with disabilities and those in remote rural areas; • To reach learners out there who are currently not covered by the conventional system; • To encourage and support the participation of non-governmental organizations/private sector in the provision of ODL; • To address challenges related to situational and personal circumstances of learners that limit their success in ODL</td>
<td>To widen access to ODL programmes. To increase the breadth and equality of access through the use of appropriate media and instructional resources. To reach out to potential learners who are currently not covered by the conventional system. To facilitate the increased participation of parents, non-governmental organizations, private sector and other key stakeholders in the provision of ODL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STRATEGIES**

- Increase infrastructure
- Carry out continuous need assessment
- Introduce context based teaching programs for ODL learners
- Raise awareness
- Conduct needs analysis
- Advocacy campaigns
- Incentive mechanism for companies/NGO’s that support ODL
- Recognition and coordination of private ODL providers


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Multimedia and ICT service centres to provide support to ODL institutions in the Region are limited.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>Designing a virtual classroom calls for consideration of the nature of the learner audience in order to have in place an appropriate learner-centred technology environment. The choice of a particular instructional technology will have access implications on its learners. Access issues that are considered in this respect include emails, computers, internet connections, web browsers etc. Lack of access to relevant technology has been found to be one of the key challenges to ODL development in most SADC member states. Secondly, literature abounds that in most of these member states, those residing outside metropolitan areas do not have access to reliable computers and internet service providers. Thus most of the time, these make use of the postal mail, which is a source of delay in getting study and library materials in time. There are issues of ICT infrastructure to be addressed such as energy source, connectivity, computer laboratories and other hardware. There is a need to revisit and encourage use of local friendly media such as recorded and broadcast materials, mobiles phones etc. in deed there is the need to consider accessibility and flexibility. In most areas, using blended learning approach could be more appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed statement by group</td>
<td>Adequately addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ICT infrastructure and appropriate technology has been found to be one of the key challenges to ODL development in most SADC member states. In most of member states, those residing outside metropolitan areas do not have access to reliable computers and internet service providers. Thus most of the time, these make use of the postal mail, which is a source of delay in getting study and library materials in time. There are issues of ICT infrastructure to be addressed such as energy source, connectivity, computer laboratories and other hardware. There is a need to revisit and encourage use of local friendly media such as recorded and broadcast materials, mobiles phones etc. in deed there is the need to consider accessibility and flexibility. In most areas, using blended learning approach could be more appropriate. For some ODL learners wishing to undertake ODL programmes in other SADC member states, time differences limit their ability to participate in synchronous activities. Lack of interaction can lead to isolation and failure to get instant feedback. Thus the alluded intra and inter member state ODL learner issues relating to ICT could be mitigated if there were an ICT and multi-media centre at the Regional level. Through information sharing between ICT experts from member states and the Centre, most of the raised issues could certainly be mitigated if there were an ICT and multi-media centre at the National and Regional level. Through information sharing between ICT experts, ODL educators and learners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing a virtual classroom calls for consideration of the nature of the learner audience in order to have in place an appropriate learner-centred technology environment.

**Policy statement**

A state of the art SADC multimedia and ICT centres shall be created to provide support to the ODL institutions in the Region as well as training and attachments for ODL staff.

The policy statement was changed into an objective because it addressed only one aspect of ICT infrastructure. A revised statement was written to reflect the justification (Not found in the slides).

**Policy objectives**

- To enhance professional support to ODL staff in the Region which would in turn contribute to improved ODL provision.
- (To lead to information sharing on multimedia and ICT at the regional level with the purpose of supporting member states)
- To resolve the ICT and multimedia scarcity in the member states

To develop ICT expertise for ODL.

To encourage information sharing on ODL at National and regional level.

To increase ICT resources in the member states

**STRATEGIES**

- Provide training and capacity building
- Establish national and regional networking fora
- Raise awareness
- Needs analysis
- Establish links with major ICT suppliers

### (c) Mainstreaming ODL in the Education and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
<td>Adequately covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ODL delivery mode is yet to be mainstreamed in the education and training system.</td>
<td>Adequately covered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Justification</th>
<th>The ODL delivery mode has been functioning for long and through it; so many learners in respect of each of the four sectors have been its beneficiaries. Despite this widespread utilization of the mode, it has not been</th>
<th>The word “impart” gives the impression of the old content based education. So the sentence should be rephrased so that it reflects the competence learner centered education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
formally recognized and neither has it been officially proclaimed by all SADC member states as a mode to be mainstreamed in the education and training system. The issue for example of data keeping relating to equity, access, quality, etc which is constantly evaluated in the conventional system is yet to be systematically and regularly pursued in the ODL Mode. As well, issues of formal registration and resource allocation, etc are yet to be areas of serious concern in ODL. The ODL to many is still seen as an appendage or subsidiary to the conventional mode. Member states need to be persuaded on this so that they see ODL as an independent and complete-in-itsel system, through which education and training can efficiently and effectively be imparted. It should thus merit the kind of treatment accorded to the conventional mode.

Policy statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy statement</th>
<th>ODL shall be mainstreamed into the education and training system as a recognized delivery mode applicable to all the four sub-sectors.</th>
<th>Adequately covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Policy objectives

- To raise status of the ODL mode so that it is comparable to the conventional one
- To sensitize the public to make use of the ODL mode so that member states can increase access to education of their people.

To mainstream ODL in the education system

To sensitize the public to make use of the ODL mode.

STRATEGIES

- Lobby
- Raise awareness

(d) Learner Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.7.4.4</td>
<td>ODL learners in SADC member states have limited support.</td>
<td>ODL learners in SADC member states have limited support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For consistence purposes, the word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>“online” should be replaced by “ODL”. The word “traditional” should be replaced by “conventional”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td>A Support Service Unit shall be instituted at the Regional level as an initiative of member states to provide basic information to learners and graduates on ODL access, opportunities and development. Add the “national level” element</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy objectives | • To help ODL applicants and online learners access to basic information that can attract them to the ODL mode.  
• (To provide basic information to ODL graduates that can facilitate their access to employment  
To increase the confidence of the public that through the ODL mode, one can acquire equally sound education like the conventional mode  
• To cultivate an institutional culture and environment which is supportive of online learners |
| STRATEGIES | • Raising awareness  
• Establish learning centres at provincial level  
• Social networking and learning platform for learners  
• Set-up information centres  
• Facilitate establishment of alumni associations |

(e) **Funding, Budgeting and the Resource-base**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.10</th>
<th><strong>Funding, Budgeting and the Resource-base</strong></th>
<th><strong>Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>The modality for and proportion of ODL funding and budgeting in most SADC member states is dependent and part of the conventional sub-system, which does not address the escalating demand for ODL.</td>
<td>The statement was rephrased (Not found)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>The term conventional/ODL “system”, “sub-system”, “sub-sector” were replaced by the term “mode”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy statement</td>
<td>(a) <em>ODL funding and budgeting in</em></td>
<td><em>SADC member states shall</em> establish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


SADC member states shall be mainstreamed in the Education and Training system at all levels. 

(b): An ODL funding Committee shall be created at the Regional level to serve as a think tank on how efficiently ODL funding in member states can meet demand on a sustainable basis.

**Policy objectives**

- To elevate ODL so that it is accorded comparable status accorded to the conventional mode.
- To make the ODL institutions independent subsystem of the conventional one, in terms of resource planning.
- To bring it to the awareness of all stakeholders that ODL as an education system merits as much support as the conventional one.
- To sensitize ODL institutions to design their budgets in accordance to their demand and to formulate their sources of funding accordingly.
- To elicit ODL financial support through a Committee of Regional experts who will ensure ODL demand is met on a sustainable basis.

To create an ODL funding Committee at the National and Regional level
To create a stand alone budgeting and funding for ODL
To lobby for increased funding for ODL from stakeholders
To sensitize ODL institutions on own budgeting and fund raising.
To sensitize ODL institutions to create programmes that are self sustaining

**STRATEGIES**

1. Establish ODL funding committee at National and Regional level
2. Sensitize member states
3. Sensitize stakeholders
4. Provide budget and funding guidelines to ODL institutions
5. Provide guidelines

**Group 5: Public Acceptance of ODL and Curriculum**

(a) Public Acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title 3.7.3.1</td>
<td>Perceptions on ODL (take to Background)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>The ODL mode is considered by the public and some professionals in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Justification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>face–to–face systems to be of lower standard especially in respect of TVET where practical work is necessarily required.</td>
<td>face–to–face systems to be of lower standard. This is considered more acute in TVET especially in respect of TVET where practical work is necessarily required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Policy objectives | | - To reduce prejudices and misconceptions about ODL.  
- To increase awareness of the benefits of ODL among key stakeholders (high level decision makers, formal and non-formal educators, Civil Society, parents, learners and employers;  
- To increase utilization of ODL by education and training providers and learners;  
- To advocate improve commitment to the development of ODL by decision makers (politicians, senior Government officials and heads of Education Institutions);  
- To increase recognition of ODL graduates by employers and educational institutions;  
- To improve the quality of ODL provision. (to go to 3.7,6 under quality)  
- To increase the number of institutions and agencies committed to, and actively engaged in planning, developing and implementing sustainable and well functioning ODL systems. | Member States shall accord ODL providers and beneficiaries the same professional and academic recognition, integrity and status as in the conventional system. |
Implementation Strategies

- Advocacy of ODL awareness through the media, workshops, publicity, publication, marketing, advertising
- Training of the public in the use of ODL system
- Create synergy among various ODL stakeholders
- Creation of partnership with employers to embrace the ODL teaching mode
- Create ODL agencies and funding institutions
- Encourage formal Teacher Training College
- Setting up of ODL directorates and units at the Ministry of Education, provincial and district levels; these have to be headed by senior staff
- Strengthening the ODL system through staff and member training
- Creation of managerial programmes

(b) Coordination of National ODL Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.3.2</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of national ODL activities</td>
<td>Establishment of national ODL structures (take to governance and management)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Issue**

**Justification**

Growth and development of any programme demands that there be appropriate structures to coordinate and direct activities. Some SADC member states do not have ODL co-coordinating units such as ODL Departments. Under such circumstances, ODL stakeholders are not easily mobilized for a common purpose in terms of co-ordination of ODL activities and for effective participation in the ODL implementation processes.
### Policy statement

| SADC member states shall institute in their respective Ministries of Education and Training, Units/Departments which shall solely be in charge of Open and Distance Learning development. |

### Policy objectives

- To institute Departments to establish structures within Ministries of Education and Training to implement ODL activities which shall lead to more in an efficient and effective manner.
- To strengthen ODL structures which shall promote, mobilize, harmonize and coordinate potential resources for increased ODL recognition.
- To institute ODL departments that shall intensify ODL activities thus deepening the publicity of the mode.
- To institute ODL departments that shall harness and coordinate possible resources for ODL development.
- To harmonize and co-ordinate ODL for increased recognition.

### Implementation Strategies

#### (c) The Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title 3.7.5</th>
<th>Statement in the policy</th>
<th>Proposed statement by group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Most of the ODL programmes are extensions of full time programmes, that is, ODL institutions offer formal education equivalency courses.</td>
<td>There is no purposeful design in some of the ODL programmes to meet the diverse needs of learners. (Adopted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue Justification</td>
<td>ODL programmes are not always purposefully designed to meet the diverse needs of learners from</td>
<td>ODL programmes are not always purposefully designed to meet the diverse needs of learners from</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
different socio–economic backgrounds, such as young people, disadvantaged women, persons with disabilities, rural communities and people who have been unable to access or complete different cycles of formal education. This lack of appropriate curriculum design cuts across the Member States. The perception that ODL mode of delivery cannot be used in certain disciplines makes it very restrictive. The need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for all necessitates diversification of curriculum is necessarily required. 

### Policy statement

Member States shall promote the expansion and diversification of ODL programmes and services in order to meet the diverse needs of learners. 

### Policy objectives

- To undertake curriculum reforms that will enable ODL institutions offer relevant, socially and economically important programmes. 
- To address issues of curriculum equity and equitable support structures for distance learners, that is including relevance of content, assessment methods and learning outcomes or achievements. 
- To provide suitable instructional resources and conducive friendly learning environment for all learners including those people with special needs. disabilities, women and girls and people living with HIV and AIDS. 

### Implementation Strategies

- Identification of needs of all learners including those with special needs, 
- Curriculum review within and among the SADC member States, 
- 3. Development of
suitable instructional materials based on the learner’s needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Policy Focus Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue: Refer to consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive education to be adopted throughout the policy document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on ESD should be separated from inclusive education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Issues arising from the presentations:**

- The whole policy framework document needs to be revised in terms of:
  - Language and editing
  - Minimize negative perceptions towards ODL
  - Check on comparisons made between ODL and face to face mode of delivery
  - Avoid overemphasizing gender
  - Use the information available on the four sector studies for evidence

- There are gaps in information about the SADC Member States in the Background document. Thus, there is need to rewrite the background, presenting the history of ODL in colonial and post colonial period, contextualizing how the region fits in the global perspective, and also demonstrating how ODL evolved in SADC.

- There is a need to highlight the strengths of ODL. Positive issues pertaining to ODL that were identified by the groups and forwarded to the secretariat can be incorporated in the policy document.

- There is need to show the difference between quality assurance and certification mechanisms of face-to-face mode and ODL.

- Consider the possible role that DEASA can play in collaboration, networking and partnership.

- Countries should also set up national ODL committees as part of the main players.

- Include Public Private Partnerships as one of the strategies for funding, budgeting and resource base.

- Proposed strategies need to be revisited so that they do not sound as activities.

**Specific questions**

- Should the strategies be part of the Policy Framework?
- What is the meaning of the term Open and Distance Learning?
- Should we talk of Inclusive Education or Focus on Marginalized groups?
- Should ODL have a separate curriculum?

**Consensus building:**

- The policy will remain a policy and the strategies will be taken care of in the implementation strategy document.
• The definition of Open and Distance Learning is based on COL’s definition. The term Open is based on the flexibility of this mode of delivery: remove barriers (age, entry requirements, space, time…) 

• We should talk more about inclusive education rather than emphasizing marginalized groups taking into account that ODL is there to remove barriers. 

• The curriculum should be the same; ODL is a mode of delivery. Therefore what should happen is mastering the skills of delivering that curriculum in either mode. 

Final Remarks: 
The project coordinator noted that the final day of the conference should come up with the adoption by the delegates of the new version of the policy framework, based on the comments, observations and recommendations from the presentations and discussions.

3.4 Day Five Proceedings: 

3.4.1 Adoption of Key Policy Areas and Issues: 
The main activity on this last day of the Conference in question was essentially the adoption of the Key Policy Areas and Issues shown below: 

3.4.1.1 National Policy Frameworks: 
Issue: Policy frameworks in most of the SADC Member States comprise ODL statements which do not provide solid framework to support the development of this important mode of education and training delivery. 
Policy Statement: Member States shall create enabling policy environments that promote the development and effective implementation of Open and Distance Learning programmes. 

3.4.1.2 ODL Governance and Management: 
Issue: The governance structures and management systems of most of the ODL institutions in the Region do not sufficiently facilitate rapid response to the emerging needs of learners. 
Policy Statement: Member States shall strengthen the capacities of ODL institutions to deliver their courses through appropriate governance structures and effective management systems. 

3.4.1.3 Capacity of ODL Institutions: 
Issue: Most Member States have inadequate personnel trained in ODL. 
Policy Statement: Institutions of Higher Learning in Member States shall develop education and training programmes in ODL. 

3.4.1.4 Public Acceptance of ODL: 
• Perceptions on ODL: 
  Issue: The ODL mode is considered by the public and some professionals in the face-to-face systems to be of lower standard. This is considered more acute where practical work is necessarily required. 
  Policy statement: Member States shall accord ODL providers and beneficiaries the same professional and academic recognition, integrity and status as in the conventional system.
• Establishment of National ODL activities:
  Issue: There is lack of coordination of ODL activities at national level in Member States.
  Policy Statement: SADC Member States shall in their respective Ministries of Education and Training, establish and strengthen structures which shall solely be in charge of Open and Distance Learning development.

3.4.1.5 Access:
• Demand for ODL Programmes:
  Issue: ODL institutions are not able to meet the demand for programmes and courses due to their insufficient capacity.
  Policy Statement: Member States shall facilitate increased access to education and training through ODL at all levels.

• ICT Infrastructure:
  Issue: There is limited ICT resources and services to provide support to ODL institutions in the Region.
  Policy Statement: SADC Member States shall develop appropriate ICT infrastructure for ODL.

• Mainstreaming ODL in the Education and Training:
  Issue: The ODL delivery mode is yet to be mainstreamed in the education and training system.
  Policy Statement: ODL shall be mainstreamed into the education and training systems as a recognised delivery mode.

• Learner Support:
  Issue: ODL learners in SADC Member States have limited support.
  Policy Statement: Member States shall ensure that there are effective learner support services across all ODL institutions. A support service unit shall be instituted at the CoS as an initiative of Member States to provide capacity to ODL institutions. (take to strategy).

3.4.1.6 Promoting ODL Quality:
• Quality Assurance Framework:
  Issue: ODL programmes in most MS are not based on effective QA frameworks/mechanisms.
  Policy Statement: There shall be a regional quality assurance framework to promote the quality of ODL development and delivery.

• Role of Regional Centres of Excellence and Specialisation:
  Issue: SADC Regional Centres of Excellence and Specialisation have too limited coverage to benefit most Member States.
  Policy Statement: Several SADC centres of excellence and specialisation shall be created and supported in order to impact the ODL teaching and learning environment.

3.4.1.7 Monitoring and Research:
• Monitoring and Evaluation:
**Issue:** Measuring and reporting of ODL progress in Member States has been a challenge.

**Policy Statement:** SADC Member States shall domesticate the Regional ODL Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

- **Research, Development and Dissemination:**
  - **Issue:** There is limited research, development and dissemination (RDD) on ODL in the region.
  - **Policy Statement:** SADC Member States shall invest in ODL research, development and dissemination.

3.4.1.8 **Regional Qualifications framework:**

**Issue:** There is no Regional qualifications framework to facilitate harmonisation and alignment of qualifications offered by institutions in SADC Member States.

**Policy Statement:** There shall be a Regional Qualifications Framework to facilitate credit recognition, articulation and transfer.

3.4.1.9 **Collaboration, Networking and Partnership:**

**Issue:** Although there has been collaboration and partnership among SADC Member States in the management of ODL, this has involved relatively few countries and non-governmental institutions.

**Policy Statement:** MS shall promote collaboration, networking and partnerships for the promotion and support of ODL provision.

3.4.1.10 **Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilization:**

**Issue:** There is inadequate funding for ODL.

**Policy Statement:** (a) ODL funding and budgeting in SADC Member States shall be mainstreamed in the Education and Training systems at all levels.

**Policy Statement:** (b): SADC Member States shall establish mechanisms to mobilise resources and increase funding for ODL.

3.4.1.11 **Provision of Inclusive Education:**

**Issue:** Inclusive education is not integrated in ODL programmes.

**Policy statement:** The SADC Member States shall promote inclusive education in the development and delivery of ODL programmes and services.

3.4.1.12 **The Curriculum:**

**Issue:** There is no purposeful design in some of the ODL Programmes to meet the diverse needs of learners.

**Policy Statement:** MS shall promote expansion and diversification of ODL Programmes and services in order to meet the diverse needs of learners.

3.4.2 **Evaluation of the Regional ODL Policy Conference:**

After having adopted 12 key policy areas, an evaluation exercise followed. Thus each conference participant completed a form, whose most questions sought the extent to which the said conference had been successful in terms of managing the time and attaining the expected objectives and outputs. Equally important, the instrument sought how efficient the process was, what problematic areas and challenges could be identified.
and what suggestions/ recommendations could be made to improve future SADC conference and workshop arrangements.

3.4.3 **Closing Remarks:**
As the Conference moved towards its end so was the time to make closing remarks. These were made by Mr. Stephen Sianga, the Director for Social and Human Development and Strategic Planning (SHD & SP) to the SADC Secretariat. Mr. Sianga started by paying tribute to the participants who had come a long way to attend the historic Conference on the Regional ODL Policy. He believed they did that because ODL as a mode for education acquisition which was second to none needed a Regional Policy back up.

Mr. Sianga congratulated the participants for the seriousness they attached to the Conference as absenteeism throughout the five-day period was virtually non-existent. But more importantly, he expressed special appreciation to the participants, most of whom paid attention to detail, given the way they were correcting even what one would have regarded grammatical trivia, like commas and semi-colons.

The Director also did acknowledge the contributions made by many participants in their individual and or collective capacity which made the conference a success. In particular, he thanked Dr. Primrose Kurasha who had made a historic Opening address. By corroborating what Dr. Kurasha had earlier stated about SADC Region being faced with the challenge of achieving “education for all” as well the Millennium Development Goals, he demonstrated how ODL was important in bridging the gap widened by education provision which, to a greater extent is through the mode of the conventional type.

Mr. Sianga stated that he had been particularly impressed by the critical issues that had been outlined as a basis for developing a policy in a multi-state and multi-disciplinary context. He stressed, that the way forward to be formulated should be driven by the Vision of the SADC ODL Regional Policy which is “a region where men and women, boys and girls have seamless, equitable access to life long learning through the provision of gender-sensitive, quality and relevant Open and Distance Learning Programmes”.

The Director also thanked various institutions which had made the conference a success, in particular the African Development Bank and other institutions within the SADC Member States and the hosts in South Africa. Concluding his remarks, he expressed apologies to the Conference participants for whatever irregularities and shortcomings they might have experienced during their stay. He believed through the evaluation process, such inconvenience, would be kept to a minimum in future.

3.4.4 **Way Forward:**
The way forward was given by the SADC Project Coordinator, Mr. T. Thulaganyo. He directed that by mid April, 2011, the proceedings for the Conference should be submitted to SADC Secretariat by the Regional ODL Policy Consultant. By 21st April, 2011, a Regional Technical Committee to scrutinize the final version of the Regional ODL Policy should be formed. By 29th April, 2011, the Consultant should submit to the SADC Secretariat, the final version of the draft Policy. Between 6th - 10th June, 2011, the
Technical Committee ought to have scrutinized the policy in question for onward submission to the SADC higher organs by September, 2011.