

OPENDOORS – ICT DEVELOPMENT FOR JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Coordinator: University of Joensuu, Finland

Partners: Iringa University College, Tanzania; Tumaini University, Tanzania; University of Pretoria, South Africa; Purbanchal University, Nepal; Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

Study areas: Education, Teacher Training, Engineering, Technology, Mathematics, Informatics

What are the main aims of your network?

One aim of the network collaboration is to provide non-Finnish students with experience of the Finnish society model. Secondly, we would like to provide Finnish students with a fresh perspective on ICT needs in the global market. The students from North and South should use ICT jointly with their local knowledge in a productive but creative way. We also aim to share experience and expertise between South–South partners.

Our aim is to reflect and provide local job opportunities for ICT professionals in the fields of business, government, third sector and education through a MSc. course. We aim also to enhance the opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship. We hope there will be creation, identification and sharing of expertise between the participating countries and local and external stakeholders. One of our aims is to cultivate the blending of local needs, business experience and our problem-based approach to ICT education through internships at companies by – for example – using ICT in agriculture to promote sustainable farming and marketing logistics.

What kind of activities are there in your network?

The students coming to Finland will get acquainted with the Finnish model of using ICT and have the opportunity to take courses not available at their home institutions. Finnish students will mostly work in internship projects that will be accepted as part of their studies in the University of Joensuu. They will be supervised by local teachers and also experts outside the ICT field. Teachers are mostly involved in creating new courses for the joint MSc degree, supervising studies, organizing internships and creating local networks.

What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

The network meeting in early 2008 strengthened the network – both North–South and South–South – and we were able to clarify our joint objectives for the network. Part of the network meeting was open to members outside the network. This proved very successful. The Asian and African networking and collaboration has also been promising. Some students are also participating in online courses coordinated by the University of Joensuu.

There have been several positive spin-offs in our earlier North-South project, and we are



expecting to see those in this network as well. One such event is a forthcoming symposium to be organized in September 2008. The network has been supporting several other initiatives in development and research in the developing world.

Your advice to forthcoming networks

We have found that it is important to confirm the commitment of all partners during the project preparation phase. Base your network on existing, committed relationships. The idea of a network meeting open for non-members as well was very successful and it is highly recommended to other networks. Doing so will widen the impact of the network elsewhere in the developing world.

