E6: Distance Learning and e-Learning in SEA

Session Leader(s)

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Focus and approach

The session involved three presentations (and one poster) of project work of 20 minutes each including:

- Dr. Ahmed Abul-Azm, University of Cairo, *Education in Coastal Management for the Mediterranean* (poster and presentation)
- Prof. Riki Therivel, Oxford Brookes University, *Distance learning course in SEA* (presentation)
- Dr. Brendan Barrett & Mr. Gerard Brady, *SEA e-Course Module and Ayuquila E-Case Study* (presentation)

This was followed by an audience discussion.

Main trends and issues

The emergence of the Information Society, and consequentially the advances in information technology and communications, is influencing the ways we learn. The demand for higher education and training using distance and e-learning methods is significant and will continue into the future. If capacity building in SEA is to remain relevant it needs to consider the following issues regarding distance and e-learning in SEA:

- There are a distinct lack of opportunities for distance and e-learning in SEA,
- There is a need to identify the exact demand for distance and e-learning higher education and training for SEA;
- There is a need to understand the full opportunities associated with developing and operating distance and e-learning programmes;
- There is also a need to understand the time and the costs required to develop distance and e-learning materials, and investigate whether distance and e-learning in SEA has significant benefits over conventional teaching methods (e.g. face-to-face);
- There need to gain technical understanding in e-learning among the SEA community, including Information Technology, communications, media and design, theoretical concepts and pedagogical design and what the user needs are; and
- There are challenges to the development of distance and e-learning programmes, including quality assurance, institutional resistance, lack of adequate resources and support staff, different from traditional/conventional methods of learning etc.

Profile of the status, quality and effectiveness of SEA

Current distance and e-learning relatively undeveloped, since there have been few initiatives undertaken.

The emergence of SEA as an environmental assessment process and its evolving theoretical basis implies that the institutional frameworks to support SEA are somewhat fluid; although regulations are still developing and practical experience is rather narrow (compared to say EIA), and as a result, there is limited availability of relevant educational and training materials (online or

otherwise). Distance and online learning programmes also present "content developers" and "educators/ actors" with a significant number of challenges in terms of quality assurance, resources required and the need to respond to learner-teacher preferences for face-to-face teaching.

For e-learning on SEA to be engaging and successful, it would be required to overcome the above-mentioned constraints through a

Key findings and lessons

It was identified that the e-learning provides the opportunity to provide good learning outcomes and support capacity building in SEA.

Content, in the form of existing progamme and capacity building materials, exists, however there is a strong need for-inter-institutional collaboration to share content and knowledge in to progress distance and e-learning in SEA. Despite suggested dangers of diverging from conventional teaching and learning methods, the potential for technology provides a significant opportunity to support existing educational and training programmes and provide stronger learning resources in SEA.

Professional, capacity building and academic institutions and the broader SEA community need to be aware of the full range of opportunities that including learning theories and pedagogical design, administrative and programme/curriculum development, and the IT capacities for content development and open learning initiatives.

Future directions

A content driven process that focus on attaining key learning outcomes – ultimately building the capacity of SEA professionals who are critical-thinking, understand the significance of SEA its role in attaining sustainable development and who are capable of practical implementation of SEA – is required. Inter-institutional collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources on SEA, and the engagement of the broader SEA community in the development of distance and e-learning resources is vital to realize this goal.