

Mathematics Learning in Remote Regions

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Project Title	Inspiring and Enhancing Mathematics Learning in Remote Regions
Project Team	Dr Ian Roberts, Dr Greg Shaw, Ms Sue Darcy (SiMERR NT).
Period	March 2007 - March 2008
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR NT

Description

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This project has several complementary aims:

- To support existing teachers to increase both their confidence and competence in teaching mathematics;
- To develop activities and infrastructure to support or motivate teachers and students to aim for higher level achievement in mathematical thinking and reasoning; and
- To use and trial interactive pen displays (IPD) and a centralised support-desk as tools to address a major issue in remote area communication in mathematics.

The project has an exploratory component in the sense that it is searching for means of providing ongoing support and improvement for the teaching of mathematics in regional and remote communities.

Enrichment activities have been undertaken in conjunction with an ASISTM project with more than 50 teachers from 17 different NT schools. Direct enrichment activities with approximately 80 students have been undertaken at the NT Year 11 Enrichment Seminar in Darwin in July 2007 and with students in Gove, Casuarina Senior College, Dripstone Middle School, Centralian College, OLSH (Alice Springs), St Phillips (Alice Springs).

The activities were delivered in a way meant to enhance sustained dialogue between groups of teachers or amongst students, to "light some mathematical fires" in some of the participants, or to feed the fires of those already excited, and to share learning and attitudinal experiences in a mutually supporting environment.

The IPDs are still being trialled. They have been used by a number of teachers or in a number of schools in Alice Springs, NTDEET Open Education Centre, Bulman Area School, Alyangula Area School, CDU. They have been internally demonstrated to NTOEC staff and it is understood that NTOEC is wishing to purchase some of the devices for their own use. The evaluation trial is continuing under a number of different remote situations.

Participants

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Dr I Roberts, Dr G Shaw, Ms Sue Darcy (SiMERR NT), Dr U Leck (U. Wisconsin), Dr L Rylands (UWS), B Grono, M Bruyn, M Skoss, J Jonson (NT DEET), and teachers and children at different schools in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Alyangula, Alice Springs and Bulman.

Findings

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Outcomes

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- Enrichment: Students and teachers in rural and regional areas have been given an exposure to mathematics from active mathematicians outside of their local area. This has helped to stimulate their interest and enthusiasm for mathematics and to further the realisation of its importance.
- IPD: Various teachers and students involved with distance learning, or with an active interest in using technology in the teaching and learning of mathematics have had a chance to use and trial one of the new hardware devices which has the potential to improve mathematics learning and discourse at a distance using existing web-based technology.
- A conference poster was prepared for the SiMERR National Summit, Canberra, November, 2007.

The project is having an ongoing positive impact in a number of ways including the following:

- NTDEET has agreed fund enrichment activities for another \$16,000. About 25 teachers are giving up their stand down/weekend time to participate in the associated activities.
- NTDEET has provided support for the further development of a maths electronic professional learning community (PLC) being developed by Bruyn (Groote Eylandt) in conjunction with an NT wide mathematics PLC.
- NTOEC would like to adopt and use the IPD devices for their remote web-based teaching.
- Various teachers are trialling activities in the classroom based upon ideas from the project.
- Vibrant new maths teachers communities (PLCs) in the NT, outside of Alice Springs, have been initiated, and they are now running with the leadership of practising teachers.
- Various participating teachers have now enrolled in higher degree courses at CDU (mainly in Mathematics Education), and some of those are writing reports/evaluations of the project activities with a view to ongoing sustainability. One teacher has enrolled in mathematics honours at CDU.

Related documents

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