

DIGI-FACE REVIEW



Editorial

Paul Webb and Merlin Kull

It has been a year now since we held our DIGI-FACE Kick-off meeting in Port Elizabeth. In some ways, it seems a very long time ago, in other ways not so long. When we were together, we expected to roll out the project via face-to-face meetings, growing together and getting to know one another better. Then came Mr COVID-19 and we spiralled into Emergency Remote Teaching mode, providing Zoom-based training and rapidly created digital teaching and learning experiences.

With time, the project evolved and centres began engaging more and more actively, each in their own way. As competence grew at Moi University, the centre there started using the envisaged DIGI-FACE 'multiplier effect' activities with students and staff, not only within their own university but also across East Africa. However, the crowning glory for 2020 was yet to come. All centres were offered the opportunity to hold regional workshops of their own with limited support and a guidance pack to be used or ignored. Such a strategy was not without risk, but not one centre disappointed. The regional workshop reports and plans from nine Centres and 14 African institutions were amazing, proving that good men and women, given responsibility with support from trusted

colleagues, will produce much more than those who see themselves simply as 'recipients' in a project. Then there were the five centres which successfully took up the small scale funding opportunities for 'Launching Activities'. The outcomes of these activities are further indicators of the project evolving in positive ways and everyone's hard work bearing fruit.

In terms of promised deliverables, the DIGI-FACE team has created and tested three generic modules, established a Quality Assurance Board and an Advisory Board, and delivered equipment to all eligible centres. The platform is maturing with added functionalities and will soon 'go-live' in its entirety. The development of a Smartphone App is in process.

Much-needed specific training for Administrators, Facilitators and Course Developers, as well as Technical support/media (e-technologist) personnel is in the pipeline and we believe that we are all looking forward to working together this year. With luck, the global situation will allow us to meet again in person soon.

Enjoy the review.



Niamey (CEGLA + WAC-SRT) team partaking in the hybrid-training session process.

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Technical team report

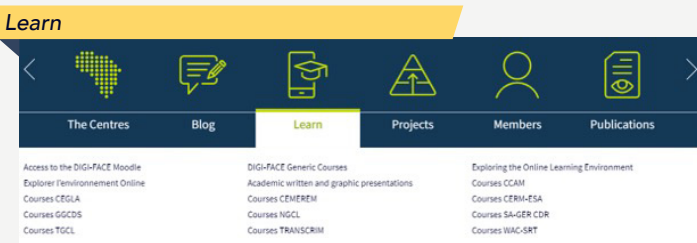
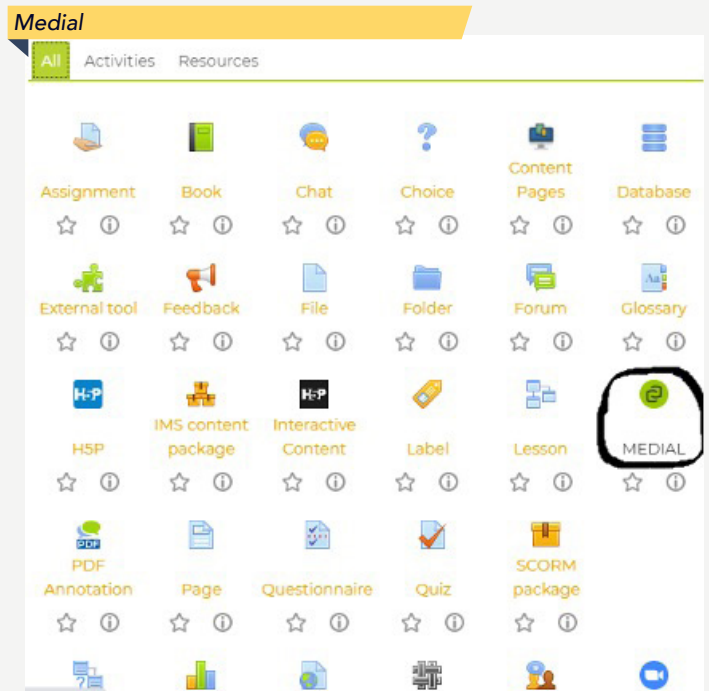
4 Mobile App for DIGI-FACE

5 Regional workshop approach for the Francophone Centres

Since our last newsletter, there have been some exciting developments on the digital platform. The platform is currently accessible at <https://www.digiface.org>, but is not officially open yet. Nevertheless, we introduced the platform to the German centre coordinators for testing and feedback in early March. A week later, we did the same with CERM-ESA students and staff. We asked the participants to populate their member profiles and report any difficulties they had with the system.

Once all issues that arise are fixed and designated local site administrators are in place, we will open the system. Thereafter, local administrators will manage the content on their own centre pages, as well as administer their own Moodle courses.

One of the new features already implemented is the seamless integration between the platform and the Moodle learning management system.



We are also very excited about our use of Medial technology in the Learning Management System. You may ask 'What is Medial?' Medial allows any user of Moodle to quickly and easily upload and edit video content. Students can respond to video assignments and receive video feedback via the Medial grade book. Lecturers can easily add a video to course pages and create video assignments. Even more important is the ability of Medial to stream media content to students depending on bandwidth availability. When you design your courses, look out for the Medial activity when you add activities or resources.

Medial also allows for live streaming of events and students can be provided with a single streaming URL to access the event. Zoom webinar functionality has also been enabled to allow a session of up to 500 participants!

Finally, the technical team is completing various user guides that will provide guidance on the platform usage from the perspective of a centre administrator, platform administrator, as well as a normal user of the system. These guides will be completed by March 2021 and will be available at <https://guide.digiface.org>

Three generic modules finalised

Sonja Ebbing

Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, DIGI-FACE has been able to produce three important generic modules.

After several test runs and re-adjustments, the English version of the module 'Academic Written and Graphic Presentations' is complete and in the process of being translated into French. Paul Webb, a first-time creator of digital learning content, said, "It was hard work but I had fun creating the course". This module systematically demonstrates how to present research in multiple formats and styles in a professional manner through systematic instructions and activities. Multiple evaluations during the development process suggest that it will provide a valuable contribution for both students and academics at our Centres of Excellence.

"It was hard work but I had fun creating the course".

Elmien Waring's module 'Exploring the Online Learning Environment' has also passed several test-runs and is finalised. This module focuses on the basics of online learning and methodically helps participants set up their first Moodle courses. It also highlights opportunities for using professional graphics and videos to give participants an idea of what is possible in digital learning environments.

The latest module, 'Strengthening post-graduate supervision', created by Naydene de Lange and Mathabo Khau, helps supervisors understand supervision as pedagogy. It aims at inspiring participants to reflect on their own supervision practices from a fresh point of view through a different lens.

Apart from these modules, three more modules are currently under construction and will go through their first test runs in the first quarter of 2021. We will keep you informed.

The Launch of the Launching Activities

As the DIGI-FACE project continued to make progress, it became clear that there were still some 'catalytic' activities required at the Centres. These pedagogical 'launching activities' comprise concrete actions for developing content and materials to feature on the DIGI-FACE platform. A small financial incentive was available for the African institutions involved in 'launching activities' in 2020. Happily, more substantial overall budgets are available for 2021 and 2022, namely 43,200 € and 43,200€, respectively.

Late last year all DIGI-FACE Centres were invited to write a proposal outlining what content they envisaged could be developed for the Moodle platform, as well as how much

of the very limited 2020 budget they believed they would require. After receiving five excellent proposals, it was decided that the total 2020 budget would be split evenly among the institutions, namely CEGLA (Niamey), CERM-ESA (Moi and UMI), NGCL (NUST), and CCAM (UPC). Regular meetings via Zoom meant that the African institutions were able to update us on their progress and their excellent activities, which are now approaching completion.

Proposals for the 2021 launching activities are closed and we will notify the successful applicants soon. We look forward to the fruits of their work and the contributions they will make to the DIGI-FACE project.

DIGI-FACE launching activities at the CEGLA Centre in Niamey Zakaria Yahaya

The Centre of Excellence for Local Governance in Africa (CEGLA) organised training workshops on the digitisation of university teaching at the Abdou Moumouni University (UAM) in Niamey. The workshops provided an opportunity to present DIGI-FACE and all the functionalities it offers. More specifically, the workshops aimed at promoting understanding of the importance of the digitisation of teaching and learning and enabling the participants to become au fait with the DIGI-FACE platform. Working with the CEGLA site on Moodle enabled participants to discover the new roles that teachers have to play when teaching online.

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Twenty-five people attended. Ten were lecturers from the Faculty of Legal and Political Sciences (FSJP) (including the leader and the coordinator of the CEGLA-Niamey). The director of the Training Centre for the Management of Local Authorities, the Director of the UAM's ICT unit, eight administrative and technical staff and two trainees from the FSJP, as well as four members of the WAC-SRT Centre (the Centre of Excellence in Niamey in cooperation with Bonn) also attended.

All the participants were satisfied and look forward to further training. They emphasized that their goal was to practice creating online content on their section of the DIGI-FACE Moodle site and expressed the wish for more sessions to be held regularly in order to ensure a better assimilation of the activities of the DIGI-FACE project.



Dissemination event at the CEGLA Centre in Niamey.



Namibian-German Centre for Logistics team.

NAMIBIAN-GERMAN CENTRE FOR LOGISTICS

The Namibian-German Centre for Logistics (NGCL) was one of the Centers of Excellence that participated in the 2020 DIGI-FACE launching activities. The NGCL embarked on creating a short course on globalization and inter-cultural management. Despite the disruption of work at the University by COVID-19, that changed the end of the semester from December 2020 to March 2021, the NGCL made progress and achieved a large proportion of the set milestones in developing the content material.

Logistics in the age of COVID: Sending DIGI-FACE equipment to African centres

What was envisaged to be a simple task turned out to be a logistical nightmare in times of COVID-19. The 'simple task' was the distribution of 14 sets of equipment from the Nelson Mandela University, South Africa, to 14 different centres across nine countries in Africa. From day one the problems started. After numerous phone calls and protracted explanations and negotiations with somewhat less than enthusiastic courier companies, we finally found one that was prepared to do the job.

The equipment included a PCStudio-11/Padcaster: Studio that transforms the Apple MTXN2/11-inch iPad Pro WI-FI 64 GB provided into an all-in-one mobile production suite. This comprehensive production ecosystem includes an extensive array of audio and video accessories: audio accessories, teleprompter kit, optics accessories, lighting accessories, green screen kit, protection and portability.

The world's smallest and thinnest 15-inch mobile workstation, namely Dell Precision 5550 CTO laptops, which feature

the latest Intel® Core™ and Xeon® processors, NVIDIA® graphics and Dell Optimizer with extra memory, a local server and instance of Moodle 3.9.3 that can be run without a network, and open source video editing software were also included in each pack. A Rode VideoMic Compact On-Camera microphone designed to improve the audio quality of video production was an added bonus.

The first package sent was 'in-country' to the Western Cape and encountered no problems. The next dispatch was six sets on 20 November and four more on 24 November 2020. These ten deliveries encountered more variations of customs issues than there are countries in Africa and, in almost all cases, many weeks of delays occurred. The last three sets went out in the New Year. By this time, it appears that JKJ Express couriers in South Africa had mastered every strategy required for every possible situation imaginable and the packages arrived timeously, apart from some administrative delays at customs in the recipient countries.

Karlien Potgieter and Sonja Ebbing are busy creating a short online production

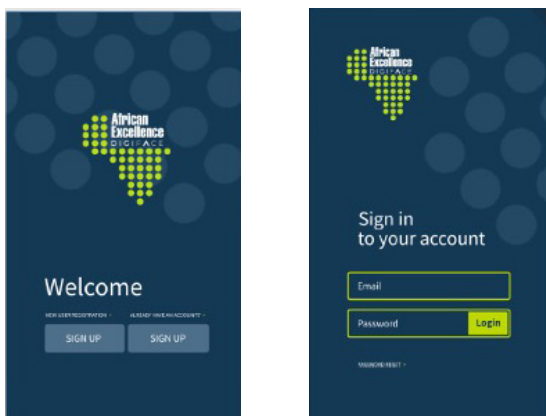
on using the PadCaster and support equipment for DIGI-FACE users. Neither had used a PadCaster before, but went through the processes from unpacking the boxes (a physical task of its own) to producing videos, and have managed to do so quite admirably. As such, they were considered best suited to create a mini-module that is authentic as they experienced the same struggles that many other will have when getting started.



Packages ready for courier.

Mobile App for DIGI-FACE

Merlin Kull



Proposed welcome and login screen of the new mobile app.

Learning, research, communication and information sharing at African institutions often take place on smartphones. The development of a mobile application for smartphones provides an opportunity to connect, work, teach, research and publish on

mobile devices, even when offline (especially on Moodle). As such, a DIGI-FACE Mobile App is in the development process at the Centre of Excellence for Information and Communication Technologies in East Africa (CENIT@EA) in Tanzania and the Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. The App aims at promoting mobile learning, facilitating accessibility to the platform, and enhancing digital networking among the African Centres of Excellence.

The mobile app will include the same function and the same look and feel as the DIGI-FACE web platform and will contain phone specific features, like chatting, notifications and geo-localisation. While the App development is ongoing, it should soon be ready for the testing phase and go live in the latter half of the year. We will keep you informed on the progress and tell you when the App is available for use and downloadable in the respective App Stores for Android and iPhones.

Regional workshop approach for the Francophone Centres

Merlin Kull

As DIGI-FACE regional training sessions could not be held face-to-face, Francophone regional workshops were held at the end of 2020 in a hybrid format. A hybrid format meant that

The aim of these regional workshops was to familiarise participants with scripting and producing modules in e-learning mode.

participants from CEGLA Bamako, CEGLA Dakar, CEGLA Niamey, WAC-SRT Niamey and CCAM Kinshasa met at each of their respective centres for a five day-workshop. The aim of these regional workshops was to familiarise participants with scripting and producing modules in e-learning mode. Professor Ewald Eisenberg,

Alexandre Martinez and Merlin Kull facilitated strategic and technical support via zoom videoconferencing.

The focus for successful transformation of classroom modules into digital format was on producing modular learning sequences

and on the selection of the appropriate tools to achieve the learning objectives for each sequence of the module. This approach enabled the participants to become familiar with the different tools available on Moodle, such as the insertion of a pre-produced or self-produced video, interactive H5P-tools, quiz, chat, and forum use. It also highlighted the sharing of documents, PowerPoint presentations, organising synchronous digital meeting, etc.

After familiarisation with Moodle tools and tried-and-tested designs for digital modules, the Centre participants were able to reflect in-depth on strategic aspects related to the long-term implementation and sustainable maintenance of digital offerings on their sites.

The feedback of one participant attests to the success of the hybrid approach, namely: *"I liked the fact that the workshop was very practical, pragmatic, well planned and monitored. The chosen approach to achieve the pre-set objectives was also very good."*

DIGI-FACE governance and quality structures

Elisa Adams

On 7 October 2020, the DIGI-FACE Steering Committee held its annual meeting where it formally established two crucial bodies, namely the Advisory Board and the Quality Assurance Body. The **Advisory Board** is comprised of high-ranked experts from international academia in the fields of postgraduate supervision, online teaching and technical support for digital learning and teaching programmes. The **Quality Assurance Body** comprises one representative of each member of the DIGI-FACE consortium. These representatives are experts from international academia in the fields of higher education and research, postgraduate supervision as well as teaching and learning programmes. Both bodies convene at least once a year.

The Quality Assurance Body will convene in the second quarter of 2021 to elect a chair and to decide on the quality criteria for Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest. The Quality Assurance

Body will examine the Generic Modules as part of the module finalisation process.

The tasks and roles of the Advisory Board and the Quality Assurance Body are as follows:

Advisory Board:

- Provision of strategic guidance
- Advice and recommendations to the executive project consortium
- Evaluation of academic and technical quality

Quality Assurance Body:

- Setting quality criteria for Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest
- Quality assessment of newly developed modules (Generic modules and Modules of General Interest)
- Approval of Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest
- Decide on the requirements and criteria for publishing on the DIGI-FACE site

What are the Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest?

Generic Modules are not discipline specific and created for all Centres of Excellence. Overall, they aim at contributing to interdisciplinary, methodological and personal qualifications towards strengthening postgraduate teaching, learning and research. Modules of General Interest are disciplines specific. The Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest are presented in digital format using innovative scenarios and cutting-edge digital teaching and learning methods. Their aim is to improve the skills of postgraduate students, graduates, alumni, lecturers and researchers in the Centres of Excellence. Generic Modules and Modules of General Interest are available as design exemplars to assist all Centres of Excellence to create and integrate their own courses into the DIGI-FACE platform.

DIGI-FACE

STAFF AND STRUCTURE OVERVIEW



DIGI-FACE Management Group

- WP1: Platform Development - Eldridge van der Westhuizen
- WP2: Generic modules - Prof. Paul Webb/Prof. Karsten Speck/Sonja Ebbing

- WP3: Capacity building - Prof. Paul Webb/Sonja Ebbing
- WP4: Long-term sustainability - Nilly Chingaté Castaño
- WP5: Overall management - Prof. Ewald Eisenberg/Prof. Andreas Pattar
- Coordination: Merlin Kull/Elisa Adams

Steering Committee

- University of Applied Sciences Kehl: Prof. Ewald Eisenberg/Prof. Andreas Pattar
- Nelson Mandela University, Port-Elizabeth: Prof. Paul Webb
- University Carl von Ossietzky, Oldenburg: Sonja Ebbing
- Frankfurt School of Finance and Management: Nilly Chingaté Castaño
- Moi University, Eldoret: Prof. John Chang'ach
- Université Protestante du Congo, Kinshasa: Prof. Patrick Bakengela Shamba
- West African-German Centre for Local Governance in Africa (yearly rotation):
 - 2020 CESAG, Dakar: Dr. Aboudou Ouattara
 - 2021 UAMN, Niamey: Dr. Mamane Djibo
 - 2022 USJPB, Bamako: Dr. Harouna Diallo

Coordination: Merlin Kull/Elisa Adams

Advisory Board

- Prof. Cheryl Foxcroft (Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, Nelson Mandela University, Port-Elizabeth)
- Prof. Mike Kuria (Deputy Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa, Kampala)
- Alexander Knoth (Senior expert digitalisation, DAAD, Bonn)
- Brighten Simasiku (Acting Director Centre NGCL, Namibian University of Science and Technology, Windhoek)
- Mame Bassi Mbaye (Head of Language and Civilisation, CESAG, Dakar)
- Dr. Esther Njeri Kiaritha (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Psychology, Moi University, Eldoret)

Coordination: Merlin Kull/Elisa Adams

Quality Assurance Body

- University of Applied Sciences Kehl: Prof. Andreas Pattar
- Frankfurt School of Finance and Management: Dr. Barbara Drexler
- Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth: Mike Swanepoel
- University Carl von Ossietzky, Oldenburg: Prof. Karsten Speck
- Uganda Management Institute, Kampala: Prof. Proscovia Namubiru Ssentamu

Coordination: Merlin Kull/Elisa Adams

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- Mike Swanepoel (Advisor Learning Experience)
- Elmien Waring (Learning Experience Designer)
- Eldridge van der Westhuizen (Platform Developer)
- Koshala Terblanche (LMS Administrator)
- Micaela Scholtz (Graphic Designer)

University Carl von Ossietzky, Oldenburg:

- Sonja Ebbing (Pedagogical E-Learning Expert)
- Malve von Moellendorff (Pedagogical E-Learning Expert)

University of Applied Sciences Kehl:

- Prof. Ewald Eisenberg (Project Leader)
- Prof. Andreas Pattar (Deputy Project Leader)
- Merlin Kull (Project Coordinator)
- Elisa Adams (Administrative and Financial Manager)

Frankfurt School of Finance and Management:

- Nilly Chingaté Castaño (Scientific Expert Sustainable Operating System)
- Callum Lee (Expert Sustainable Operating System)

UWC Centres of Excellence training workshop on the new DIGI-FACE digital teaching and learning platform

Ruth Knoblich

In the first week of December 2020, the two UWC DAAD Centres of Excellence – the South African-German Centre for Development Research SA-GER CDR and the South African German Centre for Transnational Criminal Justice TRANSCRIM – took part in a training workshop on the use of the new DigiFace digital teaching and learning platform. Colleagues from Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, who are managing partners of the DigiFace project, organized and run the training workshop in a venue close to Cape Town.

DigiFace – short for “Digital Initiative for African Centres of Excellence” – is a new project funded by DAAD that aims at supporting and facilitating Higher Education learning and research at all DAAD African Centres of Excellence. The project is strengthening the Centres’ digital competencies as well as the networking among all the Centres – between all institutions involved, between staff, students, and alumni.

Core element of the DigiFace-initiative is the creation and establishment of a central interactive digital platform which is based on the Moodle learning management system. Participants in the training workshop started to develop course material and got a good understanding of both theoretical and practical knowledge required to make full use of the different tools and facilities of the platform. The workshop that way supported both Centres in offering course designs suitable for blended and hybrid learning, – both essential elements of the current

and future learning environment at UWC. The two Centres, going forward, are joining forces to promote the use of the new platform in their respective institutes, and to collaborate more closely within the digital infrastructure that the new DigiFace project provides.



UWC Centres of Excellence training workshop members and facilitators.

CEMEREM regional workshop

Nicholas Muthama

The CEMEREM team of Taita Taveta University (TTU), Kenya, conducted an e-Learning Capacity Building Workshop for selected TTU Teaching and Technical Staff from 16 to 22 December 2020 at Sai Rock Beach Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. Seven participants took part in the training workshop, supported by a facilitator, one on-site co-facilitator, one online co-facilitator and two on-site technical support staff. The CEMEREM Coordinator and CEMEREM Project Leader both provided administrative and logistical support.

The workshop explored the use of the Learning Management System (LMS) in teaching and learning and the participants went through an Orientation to e-Learning course to familiarize themselves with the online learning environment. It also focused on application of instructional theory and design for online learning in content development. In addition, the workshop allowed participants to consider approaches to online teaching and the technical support needs for e-Learning in various contexts. At the end of the training, participants engaged in a discussion to build a consolidated approach to e-Learning for capacity development for Taita Taveta University.

The workshop was an opportunity for participants to reflect on the e-Learning needs for CEMEREM at Taita Taveta University in order to mobilise resources for capacity building and

growth of expertise to advance the e-Learning unit at Taita Taveta University. In addition, it also exposed participants to developing blended learning courses using Moodle, an LMS used in TTU.

A formal ceremony, presided over by the TTU-CEMEREM Project Coordinator and the CEMEREM Project Manager, closed the Face-to-Face workshop. The TTU team expressed gratitude to both DIGI-FACE and the CEMEREM-German partners in the DIGIFACE project for the opportunity given to them to undertake the training workshop in e-Learning pedagogy at TTU. As part of the participatory process in e-Learning strategy development, matters arising from the capacity-building workshop that has a bearing on e-Learning will be integrated into future strategies.



CEMEREM team, Taita Taveta University (TTU), Kenya.

New DIGI-FACE Team Members

KOSHALA TERBLANCHE



Koshala Terblanche is a Learning Experience Designer at the Nelson Mandela University with a focus on emerging and blended digital technologies to support learning, teaching, research, assessment and business applications. Koshala is passionate about the work she does because it affords her the opportunity to design learning experiences for students that contribute to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (Sustainable Development Goal 4). Being involved in the DIGI-FACE project provides her with an opportunity to contribute beyond changing education at the Nelson Mandela University to a wider audience in the rest of Africa. She looks forward to collaborating with the DIGI-FACE team.

DIGI-FACE regional training at CEGLA-Dakar

OSCAR KAKPO

CEGLA-Dakar is one of three CEGLA sites. The CEGLA DIGI-FACE regional workshop took place at the Centre africain d'études supérieures en gestion (CESAG) in Dakar at the end of 2020 in a hybrid format. Oscar Kakpo, the techno-pedagogue at CESAG shares his impressions of the hybrid format as follows:

"DIGI-FACE is a superbly thought-out and well-considered initiative that is following its path."

He said, "In the implementation of this project, a series of workshops have been held and the Centres have been equipped with impressive multimedia equipment (a mini mobile studio). The workshops, which took place via video conferencing with remote interventions due to

the COVID-19 sanitary requirements, did not diminish the richness of the debates."

"The feedback from the participants, particularly at CESAG, was very positive and we are now in phase for the transmission of our CEGLA modules from face-to-face to digital format according to a schedule previously established by the various stakeholders."

We hope that soon a face-to-face DIGI-FACE meeting can be organised despite the gloomy Corona virus situation in order to consolidate the achievements of each Centre and to share our experiences. The challenges to digitalisation at the African Centres of Excellence are enormous and our efforts must be well monitored, matured and perpetuated."



Oscar Kakpo of CESAG, Dakar.

The Digital Initiative for African Centres of Excellence (DIGI-FACE) includes all DAAD funded African-German Centres of Excellence

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DAAD

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