


Partner Presentation Form

Name of the organisation :	Sol Plaatje University	
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Name of the contact person:	Wiets Botes	
Function:	Senior Lecturer in Natural & Life Science Teaching	
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Type of organisation:

SME ☐ School ☐ **University** ☒ Public Authority ☐
 Training ☐ No Profit ☐ **NGO** ☐

Other (Specify)

Fields of action:

SMEs ☐ Youth ☐ **Universities** ☒ Public Authorities ☐
 Equal opportunities ☐ **Schools** ☒ Unemployed ☐

Other (Specify)

Description of the organisation

Sol Plaatje University (SPU) is a public institution located in Kimberley, Northern Cape, South Africa. Established in 2014, it holds the distinction of being the first university founded in post-apartheid South Africa and the only one in the Northern Cape province. SPU offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across four faculties: Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Humanities, and Natural and Applied Sciences. The university is particularly noted for its focus on niche academic areas such as data science, heritage studies, indigenous languages, and creative writing. Additionally, it is developing programs in agricultural sciences tailored to water-stressed conditions, reflecting the unique challenges of the region. The campus architecture integrates modern design with elements reflecting the local heritage, creating a conducive environment for learning and community engagement. SPU's mission emphasizes critical engagement in learning, research, and development, aiming to enhance democratic practice and social justice in society. Named after Sol Plaatje, a prominent South African intellectual and activist, the university embodies his legacy by promoting education and intellectual growth.

Experience of the organization in previous European projects

The Faculty of Education at Sol Plaatje University (SPU) has actively engaged with the South Africa-Sweden University Forum (SASUF) to foster international collaboration in higher education. In March 2023, SPU hosted a hybrid colloquium as part of SASUF's annual Research and Innovation Week. This event brought together academics, students, and stakeholders to discuss how higher education institutions can contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through research, teaching, and community engagement. Professor Aslam Fataar delivered the keynote address from Stellenbosch University, who emphasized the importance of integrating global scientific knowledge with local community insights to enhance societal development. SPU's involvement in SASUF underscores its commitment to international partnerships that enrich educational practices and contribute to sustainable development.

Experience and Expertise of the organization in the project's subject area

The Faculty of Education at Sol Plaatje University aims to implement a systematic approach to ensure the sustainability of the project once funding ends. This will include the following steps:

1. Organizing Workshops: Facilitate workshops for all STEM teacher educators in the department to familiarize them with Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Self-Directed Learning (SDL).
2. Promoting OERs: Encourage STEM teacher educators and pre-service teachers to utilize the database of OERs.
3. Revising Course Material: Update the course materials in the STEM education program to incorporate OERs and incorporate evidence of SDL activities.
4. Developing Assessment Tasks: Create practical assessment tasks to evaluate STEM pre-service teachers' ability to use OERs and engage in SDL within their teaching practices.
5. Creating an Observation Schedule: Design an observation schedule that allows STEM teacher educators to assess pre-service teachers' use of OERs and SDL during work-integrated learning opportunities.
6. Establishing Reflection Sessions: Organize reflection sessions for both STEM teacher educators and pre-service teachers to discuss the benefits and challenges associated with using OERs and SDL in STEM education.

Contributions that can be provided to the project

The FoE at SPU will contribute to the management activities and participate with staff representatives in the Consortium Steering Committee. With reference to work packages, it will be actively involved through:

- Researching and analysing the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed by STEM lecturers.
- Contributing to the definition of the programme on the use of OER and OEP in STEM according to the needs of STEM lecturers and future STEM teachers.
- Identifying, selecting, and adapting OER and OEP methods and tools.
- Selecting participants for the international course and workshop.
- Delivering national workshops.
- Testing and evaluating the online course and database.
- Contribute to creating the syllabus and contents and will select and send decision makers and leaders to the international discussion forum.
- Contribute to dissemination and exploitation activities.

Reasons of involvement in the project

Through its active commitment to the project, the Faculty of Education at Sol Plaatje University expects to gain invaluable insights into pedagogical and assessment practices related to integrating open educational resources (OERs) and self-directed learning (SDL). This engagement influences its academic offerings, particularly in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs provided by the Faculty of Education. By participating in this project, knowledge will be acquired about enhancing the abilities of both STEM and pre-service teachers in effectively utilising OERs and SDL within the field of STEM education. Consequently, the outcomes of this project play a pivotal role in refining and optimising the design and delivery of the STEM teacher education curriculum. Apart from this focus area, the SPU delegation aims to strengthen international partnerships and relations with institutions involved.

Contact Person's Experience and Expertise

Dr Wiets Botes is a senior lecturer who specialises in natural and life science teaching in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology Teaching (DMST) within the Faculty of Education (FoE). Wiets holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education Studies with a specialisation in natural science pre-service teacher development. His research predominantly focuses on innovative and inclusive pedagogies to enhance the quality of STEM education in under-resourced learning environments. One such form of pedagogy centres around the use of OERs in STEM education, which aligns well with the focus area of this project. He is also actively involved in presenting undergraduate courses aimed at developing the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) of STEM pre-service teachers, where efforts are made to familiarise them with various learning methods, including self-directed learning. Wiets has supervised and examined several postgraduate studies related to innovative STEM pedagogies.