Project Sediba: a programme for upgrading physical science and mathematics teachers in Southern Africa

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The beginning of 1996 witnessed the establishment of an upgrading programme for physical science and mathematics teachers, called the SEDIBA Project. The SEDIBA (Setswana word for fountain) Project is a partnership involving the Potchefstroom University for CHE, the North West Education Department, and NASCHEM—a division of DENEL, a giant armaments corporation. The project is aimed at improving the quality of science and mathematics teaching by assisting science and mathematics teachers to gain mastery of the subject and to teach it with confidence and commitment. The teaching of these subjects is of fundamental importance in the establishment of high technology industries and wealth creation in the Republic of South Africa. Amidst the recurrent high failure rate amongst matriculation science pupils and reports that local standards in education, particularly that of mathematics and science, are far below the norm, the founding of the SEDIBA Project was a much needed development.

Upon its inception in 1996, the SEDIBA Project registered an initial group of 40 teachers in the physical science stream. In the beginning of 1997, not only did 45 new teachers enrol for the first year of the physical science course, but a new programme for upgrading mathematics teachers was introduced with an initial enrolment of 37. The total enrolment of teachers in both
The current target of SEDIBA Project is practising secondary school teachers in possession of a 3-year diploma in physical science or mathematics teaching in the North West Province. The financial support from NASCHEM, as part of its social responsibility programme, makes it possible for teachers to enrol for this programme at reduced tariffs. Upon completion of the programme, teachers will obtain a higher education diploma in science or mathematics education. SEDIBA staff members are actively involved in research; investigating numerous aspects of science education such as the situation analysis with regard to the qualification and distribution of science teachers in the North West Province, the use of computer aided instruction, alternative conceptions, and the conceptualization of concepts in both science and mathematics.

Since its inception, the SEDIBA Project is steadily making a difference in the lives of teachers who for a long time tried to teach, however, with little success, and children who emerge from an educational environment characterized by crises, high failure rates, and a lack of a culture of learning. Through 117 teachers, the
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AOAC International update

Reorganization of the Technical Services Department

AOAC International reorganized its technical services department this year. Mr Scott Coates was appointed as Director of Technical Services in February 1997. Mr Steven Ward is now the Methods Manager, responsible for administering the AOAC® Official MethodsSM programme. Ms Anita Mishra is the AOAC Technical Coordinator responsible for administering the Peer-Verified MethodsSM and Performance Tested MethodsSM programmes. Ms Arlene Fox is the AOAC Programme Coordinator responsible for the administration of the: Technical Division for Reference Material, Technical Division on Laboratory Management, AOAC® Laboratory Proficiency Testing Programme, and coordinating international activities.

Method validation Programme Integration

AOAC is reviewing plans to integrate its three method validation programs (Official MethodsSM, Peer-Verified MethodsSM and Performance Tested MethodsSM) to make all three programmes more internally consistent. A recommendation will be submitted to the Board of Directors in September 1997 at the AOAC Annual Meeting in San Diego, California.