

SAT: A Model for Building Capabilities for Sustainable Rural Development

(Proposed by the Baha'i International Community)

The course instructors were: Dr. Barry Smith, President of the Board of Trustees, Bayan Association, Honduras; Mr. Soheil Dooki, Executive Director of the Bayan Association, Honduras; and Dr. Erin Murphy-Graham, Adjunct Assistant Professor, the Graduate School of Education, University of California at Berkeley. The course was moderated by Mr. Duncan Hanks, Executive Director of the Canadian Baha'i International Development Agency.

Through extensive illustration of the SAT implementation in Honduras, the course demonstrated an increasingly recognized system for building capabilities for sustainable rural development that has been implemented in communities across Latin America and being disseminated in Africa and Asia. The content and methodology of the SAT (Tutorial Learning System) programme was organized around the principle that the purpose of education was to help students develop capabilities that enable them to take charge of their own intellectual growth and contribute to building better communities. The SAT approach was originally conceived and has emerged over a thirty year period to respond to the specific needs and interests of rural and farming communities. Through an ongoing learning process that emphasized action and reflection, SAT has been developed as a comprehensive formal but flexible system of secondary education in many communities of Columbia and Honduras, authorized by their respective Ministries of Education. SAT has addressed long-term educational needs in the broader context of social action for sustainable development. Four essential components of SAT have been identified as: 1) development of texts adapted to the local context; 2) formulation of interested community groups; 3) training of tutors; and 4) community support in providing infrastructure such as land for experimental farming, etc. Government has also provided enabling environment, particularly through funding. SAT has been initiated at the community request and to be successful, it required several evolutionary steps including verification of criteria; consultation and endorsement by national/local education authorities; formal agreement with communities concerned; and recruitment and training of qualified tutors.