

WORKSHOP: OPEN LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING (AET)

DATE: 28 MAY 2013 (9:00 until 15:30), VENUE: DHET Offices – 931

1. Introduction

An expert workshop on Open Learning in AET was held on Tuesday, 28 May 2013 at the Department of Higher Education and Training in Francis Baard Street in Pretoria. The purpose of this workshop was to:

1. Identify the key characteristics of an open learning system for AET;
2. Discuss the possible application and implementation of Open Learning in AET; and
3. Assist the DHET in compiling the conceptual framework, user specifications and policy implications for open learning in AET.

The workshop comprised a mixture of presentations/discussion sessions and group activities during which participants explored and discussed key issues around open learning in AET (Agenda attached as Annexure A).

Ms Van Wyk welcomed all participants present and thanked them for attending the workshop. She commented that a small group of experts in open learning and AET were invited to the meeting.

The workshop was attended by:

- Ms Jenny Glennie (SAIDE)
- Ms Rebecca Pursell-Gotz (SAIDE)
- Dr Ephraim Mahlanga (SAIDE)
- Prof. Veronica McKay (UNISA)
- Prof. Quan Baffour (UNISA)
- Ms Thandeka Masondo (GEDU)
- Dr Marongwa Ramarumo (Kha Ri Gude)
- Mr Firoz Patel (DHET)
- Ms Trudi van Wyk (DHET)
- Mr William Tshabalala (DHET)
- Ms Juliet Sibiyi (DHET)
- Ms Esther Kodisang (DHET)
- Mr Bullie Monyike (DBE)
- Ms Christel Els (DHET)
- Ms Simphiwe Mashegoane (DHET)
- Ms Baatsena Makena (DHET)

(Attendance register attached as Annexure B)

Ms Van Wyk emphasised that the workshop is a brainstorming session where different and innovative ideas will be considered and where participants can voice their concerns regarding open learning in AET. She thanked SAIDE for facilitating the workshop and Mr Patel for taking the time to attend and participate in the workshop activities.

This report contains the summary of the presentations, outputs and decisions of the workshop deliberations.

2. Presentations

During the workshop, presentations were made on the following:

1. Open Learning in AET (Mr Firoz Patel – DHET) – Annexure C
2. National Priorities in AET (Ms Juliet Sibeya – DHET) – Annexure D
3. What is Open Learning? and Open Learning Examples (Ms Jenny Glennie and Dr Ephraim Mhlanga – SAIDE) – Annexure E

2.1 Open Learning in AET in South Africa (Mr Firoz Patel) – Annexure C

Mr Patel presented post school data from the Labour Force Survey and Census 2011. He highlighted the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act (No. 1 of 2013) and the implementation thereof. He indicated that the new Act will now be known as the “Continuing Education and Training Act”.

According to Mr Patel the issue that needs to be addressed through open learning is the large number of “young people that are not in employment or education and training (NEET)”. He cited statistics from the Green Paper (4 million) and the National Development Plan (2.5 million) as the number of people in need of AET. He furthermore elaborated that in future AET has to contribute significantly to the targets set for in the National Development Plan to be met by 2030.

He indicated that there are numerous challenges with regards to AET. He emphasised that educating people will not resolve the problem of unemployment, however education allows equal opportunity and chance for every South African individual to get a job.

The phasing in of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) for schools poses inter alia the following:

1. New subjects replaced old subjects that some learners have not passed;
2. Currently learners may only write Senior Certificate up to an age of 21 years;
3. The National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) gives an opportunity for especially uneducated adults and school drop outs; and
4. All learning materials for adults need to be adapted for the age group of learners.

He indicated that the following must specifically be defined in an open learning context:

1. What is open learning?
2. Would it be possible to implement it in the context of AET?
3. What infrastructure would be needed?
4. Would open learning and ICT work for adult learners?
5. Should the DHET conduct pilots?
6. What are the infrastructure demands on supporting adult learners?
7. What are the possible strategies for implementing open learning in AET?

Mr Patel continued by using the White Paper of 1995 as a reference and highlighted that the big issue is the development of practitioners - whether there are enough teachers/educators and whether such teachers/educators are sufficiently developed and trained to teach adult learners.

Mr Patel also briefly discussed the vision for NASCA, and the possibility of offering NASCA through FET Colleges to ensure expediency.

He indicated that approval has already been granted to start the Open Learning initiative. He closed his presentation by thanking everyone for taking the time and participating in the workshop.

After the presentation, the floor was opened for discussion.

National Senior Certificate Learners: The meeting raised concerns about learners dropping out of the NSC and have nowhere to go to complete their NSC if they are over 21 years. It was suggested that Dr Kriel at DBE be contacted for advice and collaboration on the matter (continuous/portfolio assessment marks). The gap in provision is also a concern for learners who were previously enrolled in the NATED 550 Programme (old Senior Certificate), and the proposal that NATED 550 be phased out in 2014 despite the NASCA not being ready for implementation.

Learners with disabilities: People attending FET College programmes are unable to complete due to their learning and other disabilities. The possibility of including them in adult programmes was suggested.

Supporting drop-outs from schools and FET Colleges: How are such students going to be accommodated and will it be possible to put programmes in place to help and assist such students?

2.2 Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) (Ms Juliet Sibiya) - Annexure D

A presentation on Community Education and Training Colleges was delivered by Ms Sibiya. The purpose of her presentation was to provide a summary of activities attended and planned by the Community Education and Training Centres Task Team. Background on the members participating in the Task team was given and also who have provided the necessary support to the Task Team.

She detailed each section of the report on Community Education and Training Centres (CTCs), viz.:

1. Problem Statement (Section 1);
2. Literature Review (Section 2);
3. Community Research (Section 3);
4. Institutional Proposals (Section 4); and
5. Implementation (Section 5).

The following implications were identified:

1. There are very few functional centres that can provide NASCA;
2. Support will have to be given to centres in implementing NASCA;
3. Learner support has to be a major part of implementation;
4. There is a need for the development of regulations, curriculum and educator development programmes; and
5. Sufficient mechanisms and systems must be set up for administration/ monitoring/ support/assessment/examinations.

Questions emanating from the presentation included how Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) and where existing AETs will be located within the plan for implementing CETCs. Ms Sibiya indicated that this is still in progress.

Questions were also asked what progress had been made in finalising the NASCA, and when it is anticipated that this qualification will be in place. Ms Sibiya indicated that a team has been constituted which is internal to DHET to focus on finalisation of the NASCA. Work on finalising the curriculum for the qualifications is still underway.

2.3 What is Open Learning? and Open Learning examples (Ms Jenny Glennie and Dr Ephraim Mhlanga – Saide) - Annexure E

Ms Glennie presented the concept of open learning and its meaning. It was emphasised that for open learning to be effective, it needs to be implemented in the context of the current system without creating a new/parallel system.

She specifically highlighted that open learning can remove barriers experienced by the adult learners such as, but not only, cost, travelling, accommodation, working hours and age. She highlighted the pivotal role of adult centres in supporting adult learners and its accessibility to the adult learner.

She used the concept of open schooling and practical examples of six Commonwealth Open Schools and the Namibian Colleges of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to elaborate on the principles of Open Learning and its applications. Dr Mhlanga gave a short overview of NAMCOL. The target population of NAMCOL is out-of-school youth/adults; young mothers and working adults and NAMCOL has a pass rate equivalent to the school pass rate in Namibia. Another example, the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL) was cited with significant success rates. Both colleges are making use of mainly print-based materials with significant and well established learner support systems.

After the presentation participants was given the opportunity to ask question or gave comments.

Mr Patel addressed the importance of well planned and executed learning management and assessment in an open learning system. He acknowledged the high cost of management, systems, support to learners and infrastructure.

He requested a sound argument for cost benefits/effectiveness of open learning.

He continued by emphasising that open learning must enhance the current system and resources must be made free to learners. Cost may be recovered for support and summative assessment. It was agreed that a balance must be found between open learning principles that are in tension with each other. It was emphasised that open learning will definitely be at a cost to implement.

The Kha Ri Gude materials and system were also introduced. It is currently a decentralised implementation system managed centrally by a unit within the Department of Basic Education. Learning materials are available in all official South African languages and the price per book is about R12 per book depending on the production quantity thereof. The high quality of the books (planned learning experience, directed activities, contextualised learning, full colour printing, high quality cover (durability)) were commended. Students enrolling in Kha Ri Gude programmes usually complete all the activities as stipulated in the book and send for marking. The organisational structure of Kha Ri Gude was discussed as an example of the management of an open learning system. This programme and its learning resources could be considered as one of the ways of strengthening existing AET provision.

Ms Glennie also presented a Canadian open learning example, Contact North (Ontario), that is a collaborative networked environment between existing institutions across Ontario giving access to remote learners in rural areas of Ontario. It is highly dependent on connectivity and access to IT infrastructure.

The last example, the programme on household food security in the Eastern Cape highlighted the central role of the local community and community organisations in this programme.

In discussion Prof Veronica McKay raised the diverse nature of the target audience and the need to development of flexible approaches, yet structured learning materials and experiences.

The meeting agreed on the possibilities that Open Learning provides for addressing the demands on the AET System.

3. Discussions – Large scale national and provincial needs and priorities in AET

In groups the following key needs were identified for AET:

1. AET Policy development and implementation – there is a need to develop implementation policies and strategies including:
 - a. access to schools and ICT infrastructure after hours for adult learning programmes;
 - b. articulation into universities and FET colleges;
 - c. pathways from the NSC to NASCA;
 - d. RPL;
 - e. Norms and Standards for adult centres; and
 - f. National conditions of service for adult educators (can be different from school educators).
2. Sharing of information: The full implication of implementing the NASCA must be known. The AET Directorate will make relevant materials available to the team.
3. Policy on Open Educational Resources including:
 - a. all resources developed with public financing must be made available as open educational resources; and
 - b. materials developed must also be available to reuse and repurpose.
4. Sharing of resources for AET programmes and initiatives, including coordination of resources for inclusive education e.g. sharing of braille resources and learning of sign language.
5. Practitioner development (teachers/educators/tutors/promoters(NAMCOL example), including:
 - a. In service training to tutors/practitioners;
 - b. In facilitation, working with adult learners using, open learning principles;
 - c. How to support learners; and
 - d. How to contextualise materials development using OER.
6. Quality materials development.
7. Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation.
8. Institutional design – management and administration.
9. Learning management system (assessment and learner tracking)
10. Career guidance.
11. Funding models and business cases.
12. Advocacy and awareness e.g. learning pathways established and clearly understood by AET audience.
13. Community mobilisation, participation and involvement.
14. Governance and management of CLCs.
15. Availability of a variety of programmes for adults:
 - a. Holistic programmes e.g. soft skills and money management;
 - b. Literacy and numeracy (need for fast tracked/shortened ABET;

- c. Vocational training/TVET, including workplace programmes;
 - d. Entrepreneurial training; and
 - e. Leadership training.
16. Materials development e.g. use of existing materials such as from LGSETA, ETDP SETA and materials from other SETAs as well as creating a truncated ABET qualification to increase learner retention within the system.
 17. Well-designed quality learner materials and assessment activities for NASCA
 18. A programme for learner who have dropped out in grades nine or ten who are over 21 and are too old to return to the ordinary schooling system, but there is no alternative pathway for such learners who may wish to progress to matric.
 19. Collaboration between and a network of institutions.

4. Discussions – Pilot implementation

The following 3 possible programmes for piloting were identified:

1. Practitioner skills development (Practitioner training);
2. Entrepreneurial skills (Livelihoods);
4. Literacy skills through reconstituting the existing ABET Programme (Foundational skills); and
5. NASCA.

During further discussion participants agreed that programmes for open learning must lead to a registered qualification and that it doesn't have to be a DHET initiative. The aim is to select a programme to show that open learning in AET could work.

5. Policy and strategic issues

No additional policy issues than covered in 3 above, were identified.

6. Conclusion

Ms van Wyk closed the workshop and thanked Saide for facilitating the workshop effectively. She thanked the participants who have contributed to the outcomes of the project. She highlighted that the DHET has committed to put time and effort into this project and all relevant alternative approaches to implementation.

7. Annexures

ANNEXURE A: Workshop Agenda

ANNEXURE B: Open Learning in AET (Mr Firoz Patel – DHET)

ANNEXURE C: National Priorities in AET - Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) (Ms Juliet Sibiya - DHET)

ANNEXURE D: What is Open Learning? and Open Learning examples (Ms Jenny Glennie and Dr Ephraim Mhlanga – Saide)