

REPORT ON REVIEW OF DRAFT NATIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY FRAMEWORK



16-17 MAY, 2013

SIBANE HOTEL CONFERENCE CENTRE, EZULWINI, SWAZILAND

Hosted by Ministry for Education and Training

1.0 Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) hosted this stakeholders' forum with an overarching aim of reviewing a draft Open and Distance Learning (ODL) national policy framework which was fully sponsored by the SADC-Centre for Distance Education. The Chief Inspector, responsible for Tertiary Education, welcomed the SADC-CDE Director, Dr G Gatsha; the Technical Team that drafted the ODL Policy and all key stakeholders represented at the forum (see list of participants as Annexure 1).

1.1 Attendance



The Chief Inspector for Tertiary Education, Mr PS Dlamini, acknowledged the attendance at this forum of distance education practitioners mainly from Emlalatini Development Centre and the Institute of Distance Education, in the University of Swaziland, as well as education institutions which were about to be involved with distance education at tertiary education level. He welcomed and thanked all the participants who had set time aside to attend this stakeholders' forum to deliberate on the Open and Distance Learning national policy framework.

2.0 Programme of Activities

The main forum items were outlined as follows:-

- (i) Introductory Remarks by the Ministry for Education and Training Chief Inspector, responsible for Tertiary Education
- (ii) Official Opening by the Ministry of Education and Training Principal Secretary
- (iii) Key Note Address by the SADC-CDE Director
- (iv) Brief Presentation on the Policy context: the situational analysis of ODL in Swaziland by Mr GB Mazibuko

- (v) The scope and purpose of the draft Swaziland ODL policy by Ms N Vilakati
- (vi) Main presentation of the Draft ODL policy key issues and policy directions by Professor CWS Sukati
- (vii) Group discussion on the draft ODL policy issues and new policy directions
- (viii) Main presentation on the SADC Regional ODL Policy Framework
- (ix) Harmonisation of the Swaziland ODL policy with the SADC Policy Framework
- (x) Final validation of the Swaziland ODL Policy



The Acting IDE Director and EDC Principal during forum opening

2.1 Objectives of the forum

The objectives and the expected outcome of the forum were outlined by the Chief Inspector for Tertiary Education as follows:-

- ▶ To share experiences about the policy context for Open and Distance Learning in Swaziland
- ▶ To define the scope and context of the draft national ODL policy in a bid to create awareness of strengths of ODL and the role it plays in developing human capacity for sustainable economic, social and political development
- ▶ To review and validate the Swaziland ODL policy issues through feedback loops
- ▶ To propose realistic strategies and structures for implementing distance education policy at all levels of the education system in Swaziland; and
- ▶ To finally validate the draft Swaziland ODL Policy Framework and to harmonise it with the SADC Regional Policy Framework.



Expected Outcomes

The Chief Inspector then stated the expected forum outcome as follows:

- The Technical Team was to compile feedback from stakeholders to prepare a revised and validated version of the national policy framework on Open and Distance Learning

2.2 Brief Contextual Background on the Ministry of Education & Training Role in ODL Policy Drafting

During the ODL policy consultative forum in 2010 stakeholders considered the role of the Ministry in promoting distance education, by highlighting some of the objectives and issues of concern which the Technical Committee had to incorporate into the draft Swaziland ODL Policy Framework as follows:

- That the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) currently faced a challenge of mushrooming ODL institutions in Swaziland. Therefore, an ODL policy was required in order to coordinate and regulate the establishment of ODL institutions throughout the kingdom as some were not accredited.
- The MOET reassured all present that initiatives aimed at supporting ODL were in the pipeline.
- In 2000 the Commonwealth Ministers of Education called for the immediate establishment of the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), with full backing from the MOET.
- Development of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) where all VUSSC accredited courses and programmes shall be registered and the qualifications harmonised.
- Commitment by the Ministry of Education and Training to promote e-learning at tertiary education level.

2.3 The vision and current position and policy directions of the Ministry of Education and Training



In his opening remarks, the Acting PS in the Ministry of Education and Training, Mr T Malangwane highlighted the following:



- ▶ Swaziland was on the right track towards meeting MDGs, and free primary education. Through ODL the MOET can upscale the training of teachers to meet the demand for more teachers
- ▶ The commitment by the Ministry of Education and Training to contribute towards social stability, through focus on the quality of life to curb unemployment and poverty by widening access to education. As a result, education sub-sector policies must be put in place to mitigate the challenges because all Swazis must be empowered through education. The benefit of ODL is that it can accommodate more students than the convention education system
- ▶ Swaziland must invest in human resource development through ODL. The ODL sub-sector policy will state how Swaziland can provide access to quality education to all learners, by taking into account pertinent issues, to provide accessible and relevant education of high quality
- ▶ An ODL Policy will contribute to improving our education system as outlined in the National Development Strategy Vision 2022.

CHALLENGES:

However, the following challenges were also highlighted:

- ODL was not considered as a viable system, and was not fully funded, as articulated in the Swatland Report
- There was weak coordination between institutions that provide ODL
- There were inadequate facilities yet it was essential that ODL be fully developed and expanded
- ODL was seen to be inferior
- ODL was not regarded as a priority to the MoET

2.4 Swaziland to take ODL as a quality system for educational delivery



In his keynote address, Dr G Gatsha, raised the following pertinent issues:

- He acknowledged the contribution made by Swaziland ODL experts in regional ODL activities, such as Prof CM Magagula and Mr A Mkhwanazi each of whom had served as DEASA chairpersons. Experts in Swaziland continued to contribute through DEASA such as Professor CWS Sukati and Mr GB Mazibuko.
- According to Peters, ODL was gaining more importance, due to the rise in online learning, which has yielded growth in ODL interest. As a result, Swaziland was to be part of the movement saying “We in



Swaziland are taking ODL as a quality system for educational delivery." For example, the civil service in Swaziland can upgrade their skills through ODL study programmes.

- The South African Minister for Higher Education, Dr Blade Ndzimandze, emphasises the importance of quality in ODL, through his observation that ODL was a long term strategy to widen access to higher education without compromising quality. This is because quality issues are taken into account in ODL. For example, IDE offers programmes that are at par in terms of quality to those offered by other universities. Even the assessment standards are similar. As a result, the inferior conception of ODL is not true. After graduation, evidence indicates that ODL graduates perform equally as well in professional practice. There are numerous role models who have studied through ODL.
- ODL is cost-effective without compromising quality and worldwide ODL is considered a viable option for widening access to quality education.
- Dr Gatsha further emphasized the need to harmonise national and regional education policies, to allow for the free movement of students among member states. For example, SADC has developed a monitoring instrument, to enable member states to move forward together through studies that were commissioned to focus on ODL provision at Secondary education, Teacher education and Tertiary education levels.
- The study Findings were as follows: inadequate funding of ODL; inadequate coordination; misconceptions; high demand for education; increased enrolment; acceptance of ODL; cost effectiveness; and that the development of ODL is constrained by lack of an ODL policy.

The following were critical issues raised in the SADC policy framework:

- There was a notable increase in ODL institutions and cross-border educational providers, which resulted in blended qualifications. As a result, the Swaziland ODL policy must speak to SADC as a whole, to ensure that ODL is mainstreamed for educational delivery in Swaziland.
- Non-formal education is still critical.
- ODL advocacy was to be increased to establish an ODL Association of Swaziland, which should encourage non-governmental organisations to partake in ODL
- Collaboration and networking is to be encouraged
- Ongoing capacity development of ODL staff
- Streamlining of ODL budgeting

- Research, development and dissemination of research output to address the current concern that there was no documentation of best ODL practice examples
- Regulation and assessment of all ODL providers
- Cross-cutting issues such as Gender, HIV and AIDS, ICT etc; and
- Inclusive education and user-friendly curriculum.

Services provided under SADC-CDE were outlined as follows:

- Offering a course in E-learning. An invitation was extended to potential candidates to be nominated by Heads of Institutions between July and November, 2013
- ODL Monitoring and Evaluation tool
- In-country ODL resources, such as freely available learning materials
- Do-It-Yourself quality assurance approach, that is user-friendly
- Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners course offered by the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL)
- DEASA conference in Botswana, the call for papers was to be extended to allow more people to send conference papers.

3.0 DRAFT POLICY FRAMEWORK PRESENTATIONS

3.1 The Policy Context: Situational Analysis of ODL in Swaziland:

Presentation By Mr GB Mazibuko



Mr Mazibuko began his presentation by predicting that the negative perception towards ODL in Swaziland will change, hopefully. He then made reference to the Imbokodvo Manifesto that encapsulates that education is a right for every child

and every Swazi citizen. Education was flagged as a driver of total development, including social and economic, etc.

PURPOSE OF THE FORUM

He stated that the major thrust for the forum was to put in place the ODL policy for Swaziland

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF SWAZILAND

Mr Mazibuko went on to describe that Swaziland is a land-locked and a small country, with 53% of the population who live in the rural areas and a young population, of more than 50%, who constitute a dependent population.



ECONOMIC SITUATION

He further highlighted that Swaziland is a middle-income country, which was once an attraction for FDI due to the then unstable political situations in neighbouring countries. However, SACU revenues have decreased. There was a high poverty rate in Swaziland as well as an increased unemployment rate. There was high prevalence of HIV and AIDS.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SWAZILAND

He then noted that in the light of the outlined challenges, the Education Sector cannot adequately meet the demand for education. Government is the main provider of education through the Ministry of Education and Training.

VISION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

He outlined the vision of the MoET as the attainment of equality in educational opportunity for all persons.

MISSION

Its mission is to provide relevant, quality and affordable educational opportunities for the entire population

STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SWAZILAND

The structure was outlined as follows; 7 years at primary school, 3 years at lower secondary school, while 2 years was at high school, then 4 years for tertiary and 3 years for colleges. He argued that the Education system has bottle-necks; in that there are more primary schools than secondary schools.

KEY EDUCATION PORTFOLIOS:

ODL is one of them

ODL in Swaziland

ODL dates back to 1970 through funding provided by the Danish Government for refugees at Ephesus House, later taken over by the Government of Swaziland. The centre was later renamed the Swaziland Educational Centre, then also later changed to Emlalatini Development Centre in 1991 for junior and secondary education provision only. Ephesus House used correspondence education, while EDC brought in ODL and support systems. In 1994 IDE was established at higher education level.

CORE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR PRINCIPLES

- Access to education and training



- ▶ Equality
- ▶ Relevance and quality
- ▶ Affordability and participation
- ▶ Partnerships
- ▶ Mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS

DIFFERENT LEVELS

- ▶ Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- ▶ Primary, free, inclusive and compulsory education
- ▶ Secondary, equitable
- ▶ Tertiary, TVET, quality and relevance, the need to restructure and redirect research driven higher education
- ▶ ODL offered through EDC, the National Policy Statement in 1999, which addressed ODL

3.2 **Scope and Purpose of Draft Swaziland ODL Policy: Presentation by Ms N Vilakati**

Ms Vilakati mentioned that a participative approach has been followed during the drafting of the ODL policy framework. She then began her presentation by providing a conceptual understanding of ODL as follows:

- Distance education is delivered through a variety of media used to deliver learning such as print, radio and TV. There is now E-learning, delivered through virtual learning platforms alongside face-to-face contact and other approaches blending different media. Another key concept is Open learning.

She then argued that there was a compelling case for Swaziland to offer ODL because human development is a pre-requisite for participation in a knowledge-based economy. IDE and EDC can widen access to education and training programmes.

Rationale of ODL:

For Swaziland to meet MDGs by widening access to education and to tackle challenges met by ODL providers, by putting policies in place, that will provide an enabling environment for ODL to deliver quality education, in a cost effective manner.

SCOPE OF ODL IN SD

Through ODL, Swaziland can provide all types of education, to enable highly skilled graduates to participate in the global knowledge-based economy.

The following objectives are outlined in the ODL Policy Framework:

- ▶ Coordination
- ▶ Enabling ODL environment in Swaziland
- ▶ Sharing of best practice examples
- ▶ Mainstreaming gender
- ▶ Research and evaluation

Guiding principles were also outlined as follows:

- ▶ Course delivery and benchmarking guidelines
- ▶ To provide for interaction
- ▶ Usage of ICT
- ▶ Wide choice of programmes and courses,
- ▶ Copyright issues
- ▶ Learner support standards for the removal of barriers to learning, through flexible support systems and unlimited access to learning resources.
- ▶ Planning and management standards
- ▶ Quality audits
- ▶ Efficient delivery of courses

3.3 Draft Swaziland Key ODL Policy Issues: Presentation by Professor CWS Sukati



SCOPE OF ODL PROVISION

Professor Sukati highlighted the following:

The policy issues will ensure coordination, guidelines and policies for credit transfer. They will also address the misconception that science and vocational subjects cannot be taught through ODL. He then outlined the following policy issues:

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:

Involves a Contextualised curriculum and the Development of good quality learning materials with the following objectives:

- ▶ To be relevant to national needs and individuals
- ▶ To deliver learning materials that suit learners
- ▶ To be flexible
- ▶ To be inclusive
- ▶ To provide multimedia support
- ▶ To specify ownership and copyright
- ▶ To offer opportunities for development of staff



LEARNING MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ To be coordinated by well-trained staff
- ▶ Appropriately adapted learning materials
- ▶ Clear procedures for development of ODL materials
- ▶ Learning materials to cover all content

MANAGEMENT OF ODL

- ▶ Administration structures
- ▶ Capacity building

The main objectives of the management policy issue are funding, regulations and procedures as well as networking.

LEARNER SUPPORT

- ▶ Learner support is important, that is, effective learner support
- ▶ Access to learning material
- ▶ Support to be available all the time
- ▶ Capacity building
- ▶ Put accessible learner support systems
- ▶ Use multi-media support
- ▶ Decentralise learner support services

DELIVERY SYSTEMS

- ▶ Multi-media use

The main objectives include the following:

- ▶ To collaborate and partner with other institutions
- ▶ To develop and adapt ODL materials, locally and internationally

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Staff development
- ▶ Funding and budget

The main objectives include:

- ▶ Conduct staff development needs assessment
- ▶ Allocate funding for capacity development
- ▶ Provide in-service professional development
- ▶ Financial resource mobilisation
- ▶ Partnership
- ▶ Advocate promotion policies and retention
- ▶ Develop infrastructure

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- ▶ Quality assurance framework
- ▶ Professional development for ODL staff



- ▶ Harmonise ODL materials development and ODL delivery
- ▶ Promote collaboration nationally and internationally

Main objectives are:

- ▶ Quality assurance audits
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Collaboration and partnership

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- ▶ Developing Monitoring and Evaluation systems
- ▶ Developing indicators of Monitoring and Evaluation systems

Main objectives are to:

- a. Build capacity
- b. Promote a culture of Monitoring and Evaluation systems
- c. Good management systems
- d. Allocate resources for the Monitoring and Evaluation function

RESEARCH

1. Creating and promoting a culture of research
2. Research policies, procedures and strategies
3. Create networks
4. Dissemination of research reports
5. Provide support and funding

Main objectives are to:

- a. Develop research culture institutionally and nationally
- b. Provide funds
- c. Create forums for dissemination and using the research
- d. Research to be relevant to context
- e. Policies that support research
- f. Reward merit
- g. Library and ICT support
- h. Mentoring system

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY

The following strategy was proposed:

1. Role players in ODL institutions
2. The main stakeholders represented at the forum
3. Government, for political will and funding.

1.0 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON KEY POLICY ISSUES

The stakeholders reviewed the ODL Policy Framework document, gave feedback and additional input regarding each of the policy issues:



Target Population

- ▶ To include students who choose to learn through ODL over conventional education. The specific objective under the policy issue to be rephrased to read as follows: To identify and increase utilisation of appropriate ICTs to reach all students
- ▶ ODL Policy target population should also cover tertiary level such that ODL should cater for students who were not able to complete tertiary education through the conventional face to face system
- ▶ To use inclusive language to accommodate all ODL learners, and to specify categories of typical ODL learners for operational purposes

Scope of Provision:

- ▶ Lack of Openness and flexibility on the part of ODL institutions in terms of the scheduling of examination. Examinations and tests are taken at the same time by both ODL and conventional learners. ODL learners must sit for examinations and tests when they are ready.
- ▶ Flexibility of ODL provision (during evenings or weekends)
- ▶ Diverse programmes
- ▶ Maximum utilization of resources
- ▶ Decentralise ODL provision through regional learning centres
- ▶ Include science subjects

Management of ODL; Delivery systems in ODL; Capacity development

- ▶ Merge challenges with the objectives. They all look like objectives.
- ▶ There should be openness in terms of intake and progression, to allow learners to progress at different paces. However, the openness is a challenge for the tutor because of large numbers. Therefore there should be restrictions on the numbers (such as a fixed learner to tutor ratio)

ODL Materials Development

- ▶ Develop educational software
- ▶ Have some ODL programmes or learning materials delivered through electronic media such as radio, TV

Curriculum Development

- ▶ This sub-section must be specific to ODL curriculum



- ▶ To spell out how the ODL curriculum will be developed
- ▶ To state who is responsible
- ▶ The curriculum development sub-section should be informed by ODL materials development
- ▶ Curriculum development and ODL materials development are to be treated as separate policy issues
- ▶ How will ODL Curriculum development and ODL materials development be done?
- ▶ Who will ensure the quality of the ODL materials?

Learner Support

- ▶ Have fully resourced libraries, science laboratories, and computer laboratories
- ▶ Establish links with public/private institutions for attachments for practical subjects such as agriculture

Delivery Systems

- ▶ Have a policy to control/prevent plagiarism

Other critical issues to be added

- ▶ Publicity and/or marketing of programmes; such as through the use of radio programmes, meetings, etc
- ▶ Foreign ODL providers
- ▶ Establishment of Open Institutions (National open school and an open University in Swaziland)
- ▶ To upgrade ODL institutions to become autonomous ODL providers, like Sebenta in Swaziland, BOCODOL in Botswana.
- ▶ Draft does not say much about ODL for primary schooling
- ▶ It should be explicit who is responsible for the implementation of the national ODL Policy
- ▶ There should be a policy statement to prevent plagiarism
- ▶ ICT must be a policy issue
- ▶ ODL must have representation in the Ministry of Education and Training

Editorial Input

- ▶ Include definition of key terms; such as tertiary
- ▶ Correction on page 4: NUPE stands for Non-formal Upper Primary Education
- ▶ To change ECCD to ECCE – Early Childhood Care and Education
- ▶ To delete specific institutions, and include non-formal education providers



Director for Sebenta and other key stakeholders review the ODL Policy Framework



Other key stakeholders reflect upon key ODL Policy issues

DAY 2: SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY [SADC] REGIONAL OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY FRAMEWORK,

Dr G Gatsha highlighted the following:

- ▶ The regional ODL Policy Framework as a key instrument in harmonising the provision of ODL in and across SADC Member States,
- ▶ The regional ODL Policy Framework was envisaged to make a contribution to the advancement of the regional integration agenda
- ▶ Regional ODL Policy Framework shall be operationalised by a Regional ODL Strategic Plan and Implementation Framework



- ▶ The SADC ODL Policy Framework recognises the critical role of education in socio-economic development and that education should be provided equitably
- ▶ The policy will facilitate the deployment of harmonised Open and Distance Learning as a viable strategy for increased access to quality education and support for regional integration in the SADC region
- ▶ The two overall regional policy objectives are:
 1. To promote sustainable ODL development for all citizens of the SADC region; and
 2. To increase access and success through quality, gender sensitive and inclusive ODL programmes and services across the SADC region.

Stakeholder Feedback on harmonizing the SADC ODL Policy Framework with the Swaziland ODL Policy Framework

- ▶ Key/main players who are not included in Swaziland ODL Policy are yet to be included. The Swaziland government should be included as the major stakeholder.
- ▶ The following key policy issues covered only in the SADC Policy Framework can be also included as part of the Swaziland ODL Policy Framework:) Public Perception of ODL; Institutional Capacity; Collaboration, Networking and Partnership to be covered as stand-alone policy issues; Funding, Budgeting and Resource Mobilization to be covered; Inclusive education which is currently covered under the target population& background should be incorporated as part of the profile of ODL learners; Application of ICT in ODL
- ▶ In the Swaziland ODL Policy framework the mission is to be stated such that it stands out
- ▶ An ODL directorate is to be established within the MOET in Swaziland alongside a Technical committee on certification& accreditation
- ▶ Clarification on SADC centres of specialization as follows: The centres were set up to become resource centres to support ODL institutions. SADC-CDE was responsible for capacity development. A Centre for specialization in Teacher Education is based in Tanzania for all member states to develop learning materials. The Malawi College of Distance Education is to capacitate the region on open schooling. A centre of specialization for TVET was yet to be established.
- ▶ How can ODL institutions tap into the support from the centres of specialization? By the end of the project- capacity building was to



be achieved in 9 focus areas. Funding for training is available such as in Monitoring and Evaluation; Finance, Costing and Budgeting; Knowledge Management.

FORUM CLOSING

In closing Prof CWS Sukati made the following remarks:

- ▶ He reassured the stakeholders that the Ministry for Education and Training will take ODL policy issues seriously.
- ▶ Appreciation was extended to the following partners:
 - SADC-CDE for its active role in the policy drafting process;
 - Macmillan for support with stationery used at the forum;
 - Ministry for Education and Training for driving the ODL policy formulation process;
 - Colleges for their active participation by investing their time and expertise;
 - UNISWA for support;
 - All other stakeholders for their presence and active participation.

The way forward was for the Drafting Team to consolidate comments and input by all key stakeholders represented at the forum.

In his closing remarks Dr G Gatsha reiterated

- Appreciation to the Ministry for Education and Training for their support to give SADC-CDE an enabling working environment since 2010. He acknowledge the leadership role played by the Ministry at the opening ceremony represented by the Under-Secretary, the Chief Inspector for Tertiary Education; and other Ministry officials represented; as well as all other stakeholders.
- He emphasised that SADC-CDE was set up by Ministers of Education to serve member countries.



Ministry of Education officials validate the ODL Policy Framework



EDC staff record forum proceedings



Annexure 1: SWAZILAND DRAFT ODL POLICY FRAMEWORK PARTICIPANTS -16 MAY 2013

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