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4 November 2014

ACCOUNTABILITY IN/FOR VOCTIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

5th PAN AFRICAN TVET AND FET COLLEGES CONFERENCE, CAPE TOWN, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

3 & 4 NOVEMBER 2014

Mr Cristopher Britz, Vice President, International Association of Colleges, all the esteemed professional speakers we were able to listen to, all other dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, dear colleagues,

Daniel A Poling once wrote:

*Hate cannot destroy hate
but love can and does.
not the soft and negative thing
that has carried the name
and represented the emotion,
but love that suffers all things
and is kind, love that accepts
responsibility, love that marches
love that suffers,
love that bleeds and dies
for a great cause - but always to rise again.*

Both our countries, Namibia as well as the Republic of South Africa, have a historic track record we are not able to be proud of. This is why I really appreciate the

opportunity to address you at this very important, very special, high level conference.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are to create a safe future for all our people, but especially for the youth of our countries/our nation. We all want to overcome the shortcomings, the injustices of the past. This we will be able to do through love, care, knowledge, dedication and personal as well as national accountabilities, most important love for ourselves, for our people, love for our Creator.

If we love and care for each other, then we will act responsibly in all our actions and through them, we will act accountable. However, we are to be trustworthy, to be ensuring that our outcomes and standards are satisfying the enduser, our industry, our employees, but also the youth in training.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aim, I will now speak on the importance of curriculum design and content, application of curricula efficiency and assessment. You will notice that I am not mentioning moderation, because the best two moderators will be the newly qualified trade-person and the employer/our industry.

Before we outline what a curriculum framework entails, we need to understand exactly what the term **curriculum** means and how it is applied in this document.

The term **curriculum** refers to all teaching and learning opportunities that take place in learning institutions. It includes the aims and objectives of the education system, the content taught, the skills imparted, strategies for teaching and learning, forms of assessment and evaluation, how the curriculum is serviced and resourced, and how it reflects the needs and interests of those it serves, including the learners. In other words, curriculum is concerned with what institutions teach, and with what, how and under what conditions learners acquire the required knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Social, economic and political context

Learners need to develop the necessary life competencies that will enable them to engage in all aspects of life, including work, the environment, politics, cultural and social relationships. Above all, the curriculum needs to nurture the mental, spiritual

and psychological well-being of all individuals to create a better, more caring and productive society.

We are living in a rapidly changing world, where old skills are no longer relevant and new skills are required to adapt to rapidly changing demands. Today's workplace is characterised by global competition, cultural diversity, technological and management processes that require workers to think critically, solve problems and communicate effectively. It is therefore imperative that learners be exposed to a curriculum that concentrates broadly on all aspects of career development.

The key to a successful integrated approach to education and training lies at the Further Education and Training level. The developmental task of the Further Education sector is to address the inadequacy of programmes at the senior secondary level and above, both in school and out of school, in the work-place, in other institutions, or by private study.

In order to achieve this objective, the importance of curriculum design and contents, efficiency of application and assessment are key factors.

In order to be able to compete in the global market of the 21st century, serious attention will have to be given to the increasing number of our people who need to be trained and educated for the future. It has become imperative for the curriculum to shift away from the traditional divisions between academic and applied learning, theory and practice, knowledge and skills. The adapted curriculum moves towards a new, balanced learning experience that will provide flexible access to further education, lifelong learning and higher education, and to productive employment in a range of occupational contexts.

In today's technological sophisticated society, the large numbers of low-skilled or semi-skilled jobs are eliminated by the rapid application of advancing technology in the workplace. Through integrated education and training programmes, learners will have the opportunity to learn the basic academic skills in relation to the broad mid-level and high-level skill requirements in the work place and in higher education. This will provide them with skills to adapt to any form of change in the labour market.

A single, lifelong career will increasingly become the exception. People will need knowledge and skills to adapt, control and manage their own working lives. The integrated education and training advocated will stimulate and empower learners to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, values and critical understanding required to confidently and creatively respond and rise to the challenges of a changing social, political and economic environment through lifelong learning.

Curriculum goals

The suggested curriculum framework should provide for all learners' educational needs:

The **holistic curriculum goals** should/could include the following:

- To prepare our trainees and workforce for the challenges of the 21st Century;
- To promote the social, cultural and personal development of our people;
- To understand and appreciate our countries in the context of the continent and the world;
- To promote understanding and respect for our language and cultural diversity;
- To improve the quality of education and training; and
- To improve learner performance and achievement.

To accomplish accountability, the following **specific goals** have to be achieved:

- A **curriculum framework** that will provide trainees with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to respond rapidly and creatively to the demands of the growing national and global economy;
- **Curricula** driven by and through **developmental outcomes**.
- A single **curriculum framework** that **integrates** academic and vocational education, theory and practice.
- **Curricula** that will offer a **flexible combination** of fundamental, core and elective learning.
- **Curricula** derived from a combination of credits for the modules/standards/units, leading towards **nationally recognised qualifications**.

Outcome-based approach to the curriculum

We should be committed to an **outcome-based approach** to learning and teaching. This move is necessary due to growing concerns about the ineffectiveness, non-productivity and wastefulness of the previous education system, which was largely 'content based' and teacher-centred. The traditional approach to learning and teaching promoted convergent thinking and was only driven by examinations, required rote learning and was characterised by a syllabus that encouraged minimal cross-fertilisation.

The OBE approach is founded on the belief that all trainees should be able to learn and achieve, and that the role of a training institution is to create the conditions that will enable them to do so. In this context, the learner is the focus of learning activities and the lecturer/training officer is the facilitator. The focus is on learning by doing, learning how to learn, learning through experience and using critical contextual information for analysis. Trainees gradually become responsible for their own learning and progress, and are constantly motivated by feedback and positive comments on the value of their efforts. Above all, the system is designed to encourage and promote a thirst for knowledge and a love for learning.

Outcomes have been defined as end-products of learning processes. These state clearly what competencies a learner should be able to demonstrate. Programmes of learning are designed to help learners to achieve these outcomes. Learning and the learner are the central foci of curriculum development. Both learners and educators are to focus their attention on the results (outcomes) expected at the end of each learning process, as well as on the processes of constructing knowledge in order that the learner may achieve the outcomes.

Thus, training outcomes are the observable and/or measurable knowledge; skills and values that learners are expected to have acquired at certain key stages of the training process.

Principles underpinning this approach

This Training Policy is based on principles that have arisen out of the need for **redress, access, equity** and **quality**. Collectively, this approach should provide the background against which all curriculum application processes should occur.

Integrating theory and practice: An integrated approach to education and training implies a view of learning, which distances itself from a rigid division between academic and applied knowledge, theory and practice, knowledge and skills, and head and hand.

Learning how to learn and embracing lifelong learning: The rapid increase in knowledge and the pace of changing technology have created two priorities for education and training. Firstly, it must support the continued acquisition of new and expanding knowledge and secondly, it must meet growing labour market demands for adaptable workers who can acquire new skills rapidly. This curriculum therefore should lay the basis of the development of lifelong learning skills and knowledge.

Relevant and flexible curricula: Programmes are to be both relevant and flexible. They must be **relevant** to the needs of the learner, community, business, industry and economy, and **flexible** enough to be responsive to the changing needs and demands of these constituents. Flexibility implies that programmes are developed to provide an increasing range of learning possibilities offering learners flexibility in choosing where, when, how and at what pace they want to progress. Relevance in education and training implies those basic messages and skills dealing with HIV/AIDS, drugs, human rights, conservation, awareness and preparation for the world of work; they are all to be included in the curriculum.

Recognition of prior learning: Recognising and building on the prior knowledge and experience of employees is one of the steps towards creating a curriculum that focuses on the learner's needs. It also enhances the self-esteem and accomplishments of trainees and, at the same time prevents wastage of time, effort and resources. (Skills upgrading training, specifically)

Learners with special education needs: Programmes should also aim at facilitating the creation of opportunities for all learners, to strive towards the attainment of learning outcomes. Special support should be provided to integrate those learners with special education needs, as far as it is feasible. This includes individual differences among learners with regard to differences in their background, pace and approach to training at a centre. (Special trainees' course)

Advancing nation-building and non-discriminatory behaviour: All curriculum contents subscribe to the building of a new national identity that embraces diversity.

Our role and responsibility with regard to Africa and the rest of the world, especially within the context of an African Renaissance, must also remain to be a major focus of this task. (Programme 2030)

Developing critical and creative thinking abilities: Programmes should aim at promoting the trainee's ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally. This is reflected in the development of the curricula and programmes based on critical outcomes. It will acknowledge the need to balance independent, individualised thinking with social responsibility, as well as the ability to function as part of a group, community or society.

Assessment and quality assurance (accountability): Ongoing assessment, system assurance and quality improvement are fundamental to ensure that our programmes meet the needs of learners, communities, employers and society. The curriculum should include a number of different types of assessment that are used, either alone or combined. To ensure the holistic assessment of the learner, assessment methods are combined in different ways to suit the specific needs of the different trades.

Assessing, transferring and progression within the curriculum: The curriculum should offer a diversity of programmes and qualifications to meet the varied needs of trainees in different fields and at different stages on their training route. Trainees will be able to progress on the basis of learning outcomes achieved. The accumulation of modules passed, based on attaining outcomes, is central to this principle and has to be accommodated within the development of curricula.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Open learning systems and an integrated approach to education and training will thus enable learners to learn what they need to satisfy their cultural, spiritual, career, personal and other developmental needs. Flexible, open programmes, through resource-based learning, should be fully utilised.

Mixed modes of delivery, as well as a variety of media and learning and teaching approaches have many implications for the organisation of learning sites and for the development of curricula and qualifications. The learning system that promotes

lifelong learning includes flexibility in learning and teaching, and needs to promote distance education and resource-based learning. Improving the quality of resource-based learning will make it easier for learners to access instructions of higher learning and to succeed.

Distance education is not equivalent to correspondence study. It entails the creative use of modern technologies to bring education and training closer to the various communities, especially rural and hard-to-reach areas - very important while being on job-attachment.

Resource-based learning provides the opportunity to increase both the quality and effectiveness of programmes. It enables programme developers to employ their creative abilities to the fullest in providing high-quality and relevant learning resources for utilisation in guided self-study and face-to-face learning situations.

The multitude of available **Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)** allows institutions to offer a broader range of high-quality programmes that would not otherwise be possible. ICTs include the use of a variety of media, such as multimedia technology, traditional information technologies, etc.

All mode/s of delivery are to display an adequate balance of combinations that are both learner-based and technology-enhanced. When determining the mode/s of delivery to be used, cost-effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of learners and programmes must be the guiding criteria. The mode/s of delivery chosen must be most appropriate for the type and purpose of the programme and the nature of the target group.

ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT

Learning, teaching and assessment are inextricably linked. Many assessment practices remain as valid today as they have ever been. However, new challenges have arisen, which traditional approaches to assessment are failing to address. There is also an increase in research and development, which supports the need for a new approach to assessment.

An **outcomes-based** approach to learning and teaching requires that the focus of assessment must be on assessing learning outcomes and not learning inputs.

THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

A key role of assessment is determining whether or not learning outcomes have been attained. Assessment has a developmental and monitoring function, although its fundamental goal is to promote learning. It is through assessment that the efficiency of the teaching and learning process can be evaluated. Feedback from assessment informs teaching and learning, and allows for the critique of outcomes, methodology and materials.

The explicit statement of outcomes also serves to guide the teaching and learning process. Accordingly, assessment will play a key role in:

- The continuous monitoring of learners' progress towards achieving these outcomes;
- Providing information to lecturers/instructors about problems experienced at given moments in the learning process; and
- Providing coherence to overcome the "free-standing" nature of unit standards/modules;
- Through integrative assessment techniques.

Hence, the approach to assessment will:

- Assess applied competence, which is a combination of practical, foundational and reflexive competence;
- Be flexible through the use of various assessment methods and instruments;
- Be based on clearly articulated criteria and standards of achievement;
- Enable progression through the levels;

- Be transparent in terms of the standards expected;
- Be fair to all learners, ensuring that no learner is disadvantaged in any way; and
- Allow for accelerated access to further learning through “Recognition of Prior Learning”.
- Create a careerpath for life-long and advanced learning.

Hence, all assessment must be **fair, valid, reliable and practical**. It will be the primary responsibility of the provider to ensure that the above **principles** of good assessment are adhered to.

The primary responsibility for assessment within the framework of approved curricula, outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms rests with the provider. To ensure the validity and reliability of assessment practices at any Institution, external monitoring and moderation has to be conducted. External monitoring and moderation of assessment are important to ensure the comparability and integrity of results. (NTC I-III examinations and National Trade Tests)

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

The learner-centred ethos, borne of outcomes-based assessment techniques, can best be accommodated if classes are seen as heterogeneous groups of learners moving at different speeds through series of progressively demanding activities to develop competence in relation to progressively sophisticated learning outcomes. This will also facilitate the gradual mainstreaming of a whole range of learners and their education needs.

Assessment then takes on a truly supportive, **formative** and diagnostic role, both guiding the learner and helping the educator on a **continuous** basis, to plan appropriate activities to meet the learner’s need.

Outcomes-based Education and Training requires a move away from relying entirely on **norm-referenced** assessment to largely **criterion-referenced** assessment. If the trainee has met the stated criteria, she/he has achieved the outcomes. If not, the learner is to attempt the attainment of the outcomes a second time. Counselling or

special support services may be required by those learners who do not meet the specified standards.

Assessment techniques will be largely:

- Formative with a summative component;
- Criterion-referenced with a place for norm-referenced marking; and
- Continuous for diagnostic purposes;
- Internal and external academic, formal examinations (NTC I-III, trade related theory tests, SHE etc).

CERTIFICATION

Outcomes-based learning requires that learning be assessed at certain levels - i.e. at key certification points - to determine whether learning outcomes have been achieved and whether credits or a qualification can be awarded.

CONCLUSION:

However, to be able to achieve quality and to have met the request for accountability, the curriculum is only the pathway to success. The implementation of these curricula will determine the quality of the outcomes we are to be accountable for.

In order to live up the expectations of our enduser, our industry, our Governments, our Politicians, we have to be able to:

- ⇒ Appoint well qualified and experienced lecturers/training officers etc ourselves;
- ⇒ No political appointments and political interference to be hampering quality assurance;
- ⇒ No quick-fixes, sub-standard education and training to be tolerated, done, allowed;
- ⇒ Transparency, trust and togetherness must be strengthened;

- ⇒ The professional status of our implementers has to be strengthened, respected and remunerated accordingly;
- ⇒ The financial needs must be accepted and provided for;
- ⇒ Technical training is not a second choice career path, but has to be lifted to a career path of choice and dignity;
- ⇒ By striving for these upliftments/changes etc poverty and unemployment will be combatted and entrepreneurship will be strengthened.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us join forces, let us share our knowledge and experiences in order to ensure that our continent, Africa, and all our countries will be pacesetters in respect of reconciliation, love, care and technical competitiveness.

I thank you.

*May God bless Africa;
May God bless our countries;
May God bless you and all of us.*

Eckhart DG Mueller
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