

# **QUALITY ASSURING E-LEARNING: A REVIEW OF POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION-**

**INTERROGATING QUALITY ASSURANCE OF E-LEARNING IN  
ADULT OCCUPATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL LEARNING IN  
SOUTH AFRICA**

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# INTRODUCTION

- South Africa has a regulatory framework in place that provides for quality assurance of occupational learning against eight core criteria.
- The framework uses an outcomes-based methodology, which is linked specifically to unit standards with specific outcomes and assessment criteria that accumulate towards a qualification.
- There is still no South African national policy for e-learning, even though it is the role of the QCTO to develop one.

# CURRENT QUALITY ASSURING BODIES

- SAQA does not provide quality assurance of learning. The quality assurance bodies which quality assure learning in South Africa are:
- UMALUSI
- Council for Higher Education
- Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

# TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

- SAQA follows TQM principles in the delivery of education.
- *Total Quality Management in Education* (Sallis, 2002) from the USA and from the United Kingdom *Quality Assurance in Continuing Professional Education: An Analysis* (Tovey, 1994)

- Le Grange (2011) and Hoosen and Butcher (2012) note that there is a distance-learning framework in place that specifically provides guidelines for Training Providers regarding the delivery of good quality e-learning.

# DELIVERY MODEL

- E-learning is a delivery mechanism of learning in as much as Recognition of Prior Learning (APL in the USA) is one, and conventional tuition or face to face learning is another.
- E- learning could also be described as technology based delivery of learning as recent trends note that e-learning is specifically targeted towards computer based learning as trends have emerged

# DEVELOPING A FLEXIBLE E-LEARNING POLICY

- Due to the ever changing landscape of technology policy trying to regulate learning has to be flexible.
- The e-learning policy developed by the SETA does not consider a technological framework, but rather looks at how a quality assurance framework, namely the eight core criteria, can be complimented by the use of technology that is not platform or software specific.

# POLICY BASED RESEARCH

- Anderson, Brown, Murray, Simpson and Mentis (2006) from Massey University completed a comprehensive study on the use of policy in e-learning tertiary institutions in 9 countries, 5 agencies and across various provinces in a pursuit of a global discussion on e-learning policy and practice at a national, or organizational level.



# CURRENT CHALLENGES-SA

- **E-learning and outcomes-based methodology versus distance learning**
- Le Grange (2011) argues that e-learning and outcomes-based education are not only compatible, but perfect partners to monitor, track and support the learning process
- Masoumi and Lindström (2011) argue that “e-learning is not just a delivery medium along with other educational tools; rather, it ought to be viewed as a new approach to education, teaching, and learning” (p. 28).

# CURRENT CHALLENGES-SA

- **Outcomes-based methodology versus traditional education**
  - *Content dumping*
  - *Inappropriately designed assessments*
- **Comparing the challenges experienced by Training Providers (educational institutions) in Taiwan with those experienced in South Africa**

# CHALLENGES TAIWAN AND SA

- It is noteworthy that in Taiwan, like South Africa, Providers use knowledge recall in the assessment of knowledge, and “many courseware applications used multiple-choice questions to test the level of memorization in the knowledge” (p. 1621).
- Similarly, preparing content that is fit-for-purpose and outcomes-based is limited to providing simple download processes and content that is cut and pasted from the original paper bound products.

# CHALLENGES TAIWAN AND SA

- While Training Providers may have education and training knowledge, this does not necessarily translate into an understanding of the software or platform development required in order to meet the needs of education and training in an e-learning environment

# CHALLENGES TAIWAN AND SA

- In many cases, it would be helpful not only to engage with the Training Provider representatives, namely the curriculum designers and content developers, but with the developers of the e-learning platform to ensure that there is no misrepresentation or misunderstanding with respect to what can be achieved or what is required to be achieved

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that e-learning policy is aligned with national policy on the delivery of learning, especially if a current framework exists.
- Ensure e-learning is defined and understood in terms of the delivery methodology required and the expectations of the body
- Engage in information sharing and sensitization workshops on e-learning delivery as required in terms of the definition adopted, with both Training Providers and their development partners.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a language guide in terms of regulation, which explains how the regulatory body defines and interprets e-learning vocabulary.
- Consider the multiple delivery methodologies noted within e-learning and whether or not mobile learning may pose a challenge to the integrity of existing quality assurance.
- Pilot the policy in conjunction with accrediting a Training Provider. This will help with understanding the unique challenges faced by all participants in the development and delivery of e-learning within the country in which the policy will be implemented.

# CONCLUSION

- A Quality Assurance Framework can only improve the quality of provision in education, training and development.