

Design Evaluation of Policy on Community Colleges

Evaluation No: RFP51/2014

Inception report submitted to
DPME/DHET



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Introduction

The South African Institute for Distance Education (*Saide*) submitted a proposal in response to the Terms of Reference (RFP51/2014) for a Design Evaluation of the National Policy for Community Colleges and received confirmation (letter dated 23 May 2014) that it would be appointed as the service provider.

A briefing meeting was held in Pretoria on 12 June 2014 at which *Saide* was briefed by Department of Higher Education (DHET) and the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) on the sector, the institutional environment and the policy document, on the budget available, and on the gaining of access to documentation and data. Useful pointers regarding key DHET staff and stakeholders to be interviewed were also provided.

Subsequently, additional information was received from the DHET that required some adjustment to the proposed work flow. This included changing the order of activities in the evaluation plan.

DHET also provided copies of a draft version 9 of the Policy on Community Colleges. This draft policy was then gazetted for public comment on 4 July 2014, but subsequently withdrawn on 7 July 2014. This fact will impact on the proposed evaluation time frame as *Saide* is unable to engage with the policy analysis until it receives a copy of the signed off policy. A very initial draft logframe document was provided by DHET and the DPME provided two examples of completed the EU fiche template.

1. Process undertaken during the inception phase

Saide developed the initial proposal and attended the briefing meeting on 12 June 2014.

In line with the requirements for preparation of the inception report, revisions to the *Saide* evaluation proposal are detailed below. In light of a budget cap of R400 000 (including VAT) changes to time allocations for specific evaluation activities have necessarily been curtailed to accommodate the budget cut of about 36%. This was the only option as it has not been possible to cut out any of the evaluation activities *per se*.

The revision of the proposal was particularly influenced by our sight of the Draft 9 of May 2014 of the *National Policy for Community Colleges*, the budget considerations identified above, and general information gained at the briefing meeting and initial review of the initial draft logframe provided on 12 June 2014.

The team as presented in the proposal was confirmed and minor role adjustments made. Various templates provided by DPME and UNESCO in relation to design evaluation will be examined and reworked to fit the purpose of the Terms of Reference.

2. Changes to our understanding of the Terms of Reference

The initial understanding was that there was a substantial policy document. In the event when the Draft 9 was received we realised that this was a problematic and incomplete policy document and that it also incorporated elements that would more rightly be in an implementation plan (but which were also very weakly described).

Initially it was confirmed that the draft of the policy received was the version that would be gazetted, and indeed this occurred on 4 July 2014. However, it was then withdrawn on 7 July. Currently we have no indication as to when the next version will be made available.

Communications with DHET and the DPME in this regard confirm that *Saide* should go ahead with the evaluation, commencing with work in developing a community college policy analysis template based on our examination of the templates provided by DPME and UNESCO in preparation for use when the policy document is made available. Work on the literature review and attendance at the first Steering Committee meeting will likewise continue.

It was further agreed that we could not conduct a detailed analysis of the policy until such time as we received a final draft policy from DHET.

Secondly, we had to do some reduction of the scale of our work because of the budget cap (as indicated in 5. below).

Thirdly, it was clarified at the briefing session that no theory of change specifically related to this project existed and that we would need to develop one, though, given the problems in relation to the status of the draft policy, this work would of necessity, initially be of a generic nature. Further we hold that it is key that the process be owned by DHET and therefore advise a collaborative method for the development of the theory of change.

Fourthly, the existing logframe (as of 12 June) supplied by DMPE, is in an undeveloped state and this will require significant attention. Again, a generic logframe would be developed in conjunction with the policy analysis template (and this logframe could be populated with data later in the process).

3. Changes in the approach, design and methods of the policy design evaluation

As indicated in 2 above, our initial work will be fairly generic in policy analysis template construction. We will also look at the literature in relation to community colleges and to theories of change as well as undertaking a review of relevant policy documents and related DHET reports. Some of the terminology in relation to data collection was adjusted in the revised proposal to more clearly reflect the work to be done.

The list of stakeholders identified by DHET for interview purposes (see page 15 of the accompanying revised proposal) is currently at 15. Given the budget constraints it is probable that this list will need to be pared down. Instead of primary sources, use will also need to be made of secondary sources such as the reuse of some data obtained from previous studies, such as the community and adult education task team.

We incorporated attendance at the three scheduled steering committee meetings and the proposed associated workshops with stakeholders and work on preparing for the facilitation of these workshops with the DPME. To make the most efficient use of the time available, the workshop to develop the theory of change (ToC) will be linked to the second steering committee meeting. Also linked with this meeting and workshop, it is proposed that time be allocated for the interviewing of provincial education department representatives. At the third steering committee meeting the draft report will be presented and workshopped with stakeholders.

Generally, the budget has had to be reworked to accommodate the capped limit and the extended workshop time associated with three steering committee meetings.

4. The approach taken for changes to the evaluation plan and to the proposal

This was responsive to directions (including specific advice on persons to be interviewed) and comments from the DPME and the DHET, the input on function shift from the DHET, and the budget constraints.

In the light of this the following key activities have been replanned:

- Given the absence of the ToC, *Saide* will need to develop it in a stakeholder workshop. This will be done in collaboration with the DPME, using their standard TOC workshop design process.
- On sight of the very initial nature of the draft logframe, it has also become apparent that *Saide* will need to develop a high level logframe and then workshop it with the relevant stakeholders.
- The sample fiche templates provided by the DPME will need to be revised to fit the policy design evaluation requirements.
- A change of activity sequence was effected in the design evaluation, with the TOC workshop shifted till after the stakeholder interviews have been conducted.

5. The approach taken to changes to the budget

Very roughly our budget had to be cut by 36%. This involved reordering the number of person hours per component of work. This will significantly impact both the breadth and depth with which the evaluation will be undertaken.

In particular,

- we will have to cut the number of days to be spent on the literature review and will have to draw extensively on literature review produced by the task team on community education.
- it will be essential to streamline the interview process, combining interviewees wherever possible, and ensuring that the interviews are conducted on a restricted number of days. The DHET Research office will be essential in assisting us in this regard.

6. Changes to the team (roles and levels of effort)

There were no major changes here, simply refinements of role. Maryla Bialobrzaska's role as project manager and contact person and Jenny Glennie's role as project advisor were confirmed. Prof John Aitcheson will lead the evaluation and Dr Ephraim Mhlana will be responsible for quality control as well being involved in the interview process

7. Clarifications on how capacity development elements will be addressed (building capacity of partner departments and PDI/young evaluators)

After discussion at the briefing session it was confirmed that the two interns at DPME and two at DHET would participate in the processes associated with the development of a theory of change and logframe, would examine the various templates and instruments we develop and sit in and take notes in the various interviews conducted with officials and stakeholders.

8. Changes to the quality assurance plan (in the revised proposal)

There were no major changes.

The appointment of the reviewer(s) is to be done by DPME and *Saide* is required to set a side time to incorporate suggested changes

The report would be refined and finalised in the light of comments received from the workshop associated with the third steering committee meeting and the peer review(s).

We explicitly note the quality assurance function of the three steering committee meetings.

9. Design evaluation proposal and plan

Please see the accompanying detailed “Design Evaluation of the Policy on Community Colleges” that has been revised to align with the changes to the design evaluation detailed above. In particular attention is drawn to the revised Evaluation Plan on page 19 and the revised budget on page 29.