**Curriculum Development**



An array of factors needs to be taken into account when planning the design and development of a curriculum. These range from having a clear picture of the target audience through deciding on the most appropriate teaching and learning approach, to ways in which quality is assured. The following sections highlight key aspects that need to be considered.

**Curriculum Sources**

There are a number of sources that inform the design of a curriculum. Some of these, such as national policies and Accreditation Body requirements, are of an external nature that cannot be changed. An important starting point from an internal perspective is to conduct contextual research within the institutional context. Learner profiles will be determined from the contextual research undertaken along with the review of national/regional demands and the learning environment. These will be used to ensure alignment of approach and level used in the design of the curriculum, in particular to contextualise and make content relevant to the target group background, prior learning and experience. Important factors to consider are the cost of the design and its implementation for students, educators and the institution as well as the time available to design the curriculum.

**Teaching and learning approach**

Based on the contextual research, a teaching and learning approach needs to be selected. For example is it going to be a purely face-to face, classroom- based programme or a more flexible programme that makes greater use of a resource-based teaching and learning method? Different learning models could be used for different contexts within the overall curriculum.

**Key Purposes and Learning Outcomes**

The key purpose for the curriculum needs to be identified together with detailed learning outcomes. Any content, learning or assessment activities designed and developed need to be in alignment with these.

**Content and Skills**

The discipline or subject field needs to be considered in terms of what could be done and what should not be done. It is important to identify the content and skills that needs to be learned that aligns to the learning outcomes.

**Key Purposes and Learning Outcomes**

More detailed learning outcomes will be determined for each ETD programme with content, learning and assessment activities designed and developed in alignment with these.

**Teaching and Learning materials**

In a resource-based learning approach, teaching and learning materials are of fundamental importance. First, an audit of existing materials should be undertaken. Increasingly, excellent resources are being made available as Open Educational Resources (OER) which are available free of charge to download, use, and even adaptation. Second, where gaps in existing resources exist – new resources will be designed and developed.

**Engagement methods**

A range of methods can be used. These include engaging with personnel on a one-to-one, individual basis, working with small groups as well as establishing and maintaining professional learning communities (PLCs) or learning networks. The type of engagement will depend on the specific context and the nature of the curriculum but can include online, offline or blended solutions. Activities should be carefully sequenced and ‘scaffolded’ to support mastery of new skills and knowledge.

**Assessment activities**

The design and application of assessment activities are central to the successful implementation of the curriculum. Assessment activities can be used formatively to track and guide progress. Integrated summative assessment should also be implemented to determine the levels of competence achievement. Feedback to students is an essential part of the process.

**Learning support**

Learning support includes a variety of possible options:

* Individual coaching and mentoring - providing support on task at the learner’s own rate
* Peer support – including collaboration in small groups
* Tutor/ facilitator support – providing formative feedback on assessment tasks to small groups of learners to reflect on and consolidate applied learning
* Tutoring sessions - a tutor or facilitator helping to mediate key content to a group of learners.
* Provision of quality teaching and learning support materials – new knowledge and skills sufficiently well mediated so as to “teach” providing support to learners in their own time and at their own pace.

**Technologies**

Supporting Information and communication technologies (ICTs) may be integrated to support the implementation. The use of ICT may be predominantly for storage of and access to resources, communication purposes, for tracking progress on a programme or for overall programme implementation. For example, support for communication such as instructor <-> learner and learner <-> learner using technology could be effected in a variety of ways ranging from low-end technology (e.g. short messaging) through to higher-end technology (e.g. online discussion forms).

**Quality assurance**

Internal and external systems should be put in place to monitor and support the implementation of the curriculum to assure quality delivery.