

The IEB has a budget to develop and implement innovative assessment products intended to challenge and transform provisioning. Being completely separate from provisioning, this model allows space for providers to be innovative and transformative themselves. The blurring of the line between external assessment and provisioning would only result in the stifling of innovation and excellence within the sector. Most importantly it weakens the principles of validity and integrity that are the cornerstones of a functioning system. It erodes the integrity of the results and in the long term would lead to the demise of adult assessment.

By being completely independent of provisioning, the IEB is in a unique position. It has no vested interest in the outcomes of the assessment and hence is able to provide an unbiased judgement of competence. If our income was dependent on the pass rate of candidates, there would be a temptation to "doctor" the results, to ensure a better income. The IEB is a non-profit organisation and hence has no owners or shareholders who would be interested in profit. Any profit generated by the IEB is re-directed back into the organisation. The bottom line is that the IEB has no interest in doing anything other than providing credible, reliable and valid assessments.

AET Processes

The IEB is committed to improving its service to clients whilst also complying with directives from Umalusi. To this end, the IEB has made the following changes to its procedures:

1. The IEB will be using a dedicated email address for all correspondence relating to centre and examination registrations – aet@ieb.co.za. Clients are requested to begin using this email address with immediate effect.
 - a. The IEB has a 24 hour turnaround time to answer emails. If you have not received an acknowledgement to your email within this time please contact the Section Manager, Sharona Nundkumar at nundkumars@ieb.co.za or telephonically on 011 483 9727.

2. Exam Event Forms must be emailed at least two (2) weeks prior to the deadline for registrations.
3. The closing date for registrations is the date when all learner registrations must be captured on the IEB's database.
4. The SBA marks for NQF 1 examinations must be submitted with the learner registrations.
5. Clients will be sent confirmation of registrations and are required to complete and return a declaration of accuracy form once they are satisfied that all entries are correct.

The above processes are to ensure that clients receive pro-forma invoices timeously and that clients have an opportunity to check the registrations before the question papers are despatched.

NQF 1 EXAMINATIONS

Umalusi have advised the IEB that they will no longer be quality assuring the NQF 1 examinations on a monthly basis. They have granted the IEB permission to conduct **four** NQF 1 examinations per year. Thus, the IEB will conduct the NQF 1 examinations for Communications in English and Mathematical Literacy in March, June, September and November. Examinations for the other learning areas (Economic & Management Sciences, Human & Social Sciences, Life Orientation, Natural Sciences, Small Medium and Micro Enterprises & Technology) will take place in June and November.

AET LEVELS 1 to 3 EXAMINATIONS

The IEB will continue to offer these examinations on a monthly basis from February to December each year.



Sharona Nundkumar
Manager: Entry and Resulting

Fairness in assessment: The importance of separating provisioning and external assessment

"A game of soccer requires the referee to be completely separate from the players. He cannot have any loyalty to one or other of the teams."

Adult Education and Training faces its most challenging time since the enactment of the Skills Development Act in 1998 and the accompanying establishment of the SETAs. For years prior to the Skills Development Act and the first Skills Development Strategy provisioning of Adult Education was located mainly within the State (through Public Adult Learning Centres) as well as NGOs and other community related structures and projects.

The development and delivery of training was dependent on the capacity and ability of the various providers with a number of these linked to the formal schooling curriculum. The certification of these programmes was also not nationally coordinated or validated with a number of providers issuing their own certificates. While any provision of learning is regarded as a positive, many of these programmes were not portable and did not provide adults with certificates that they could use to seek employment or further their learning.

It is important to note, that in general, organisations and individuals working to provide learning opportunities and programmes in Adult education during this period were doing so out of a commitment to people and community development rather than the possibility of enriching themselves.



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THE IEB AND AET

June 2017 IN THIS ISSUE

**Fairness in assessment:
The importance of
separating provisioning
and external
assessment**

**Assessment OF learning,
Assessment AS learning
and Assessment
FOR learning**

AET Processes

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Stakeholders and role-players were always aware of this disparity of provisioning and certification and the establishment of the first adult specific examination by the IEB was a response to the need to offer a meaningful way of judging the programmes that were being offered and also provide adult learners with a certificate that they could use with confidence because it was not linked to a provider but a reputable independent assessment body.

One of the reasons the IEB was at the forefront of this development was that stakeholders and role-players saw the IEB as an independent professional institution that not only had expertise and interest in education and training (specifically assessment) but also independent of any provisioning that was taking place. It could therefore be trusted to provide professional judgement on the acquisition of the required learning outcomes of learners from various training programmes that adult learners were going through because its only interest was a quality judgement of competence. Because it had no vested interest in the provisioning, the success or otherwise of learners in the assessment did not impact on its credibility or effectiveness as an organisation.

New government policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s in education and training provided further impetus to the development of adult education as a distinct sector from schooling. The enactment of the Skills Development Act in 1998 provided a legislated framework for the conduct of training that was located within the labour market. Crucially, the Skills Development Levies Act provided a way for employers to budget and pay for the development of people in their employ and that of communities.

While this was a positive development it created a scenario where more players came into the sector, including those that may well have had the interest of adult learners and their communities at heart but also saw an opportunity to make money.

There have been other unintended consequences, including the exclusion of experienced committed NGO community projects in the provisioning of adult education and training in favour of new entrants that do not have the same quality or commitment to the sector. The focus on grants has also meant that the emphasis of provisioning has been dictated to by the availability of funding almost to the exclusion of what makes educational and developmental sense.

For training providers, the assessment has become "high-stakes" in that the results that learners get may impact on the ability of the provider to make a profit or indeed survive. A number of projects that are funded by SETAs insist on payment only for successful candidates. The impact of this is profound for training providers because even though they have spent time and resources training, for example 100 learners, they may end up being paid only for 60 learners, depending on the success rate.

This is further exacerbated by the lack of available funding from Corporate Social Investment and the Skills Development Levy due to economic conditions and reprioritisation by the Government. This means every cent spent on adult education and training has to be accounted for and show value.

What does this mean for the relationship between provisioning and assessment? The National Qualifications Framework is premised on an integrated approach to education and training with high quality qualifications and part qualifications as a basis for lifelong learning. The key to maintaining quality of qualifications and part-qualifications is the integrity of assessment.

There are various types of assessments that are used depending on the purpose for which the assessment is used. For the purposes of this discussion the focus is on "assessment of learning" rather than "assessment for learning". In other words the focus is on summative assessment that results in a nationally recognised certificate.

As indicated earlier, the history of adult learning moved from a situation where provision and assessment were so closely intertwined it was difficult to tell whether the results of the assessment were genuine or not. In times of pressure, such as it exists at the moment, it is tempting to think the "good old days" were better. It is easy to think it would be more comfortable to relax the need for an independent external assessment in favour of assessments that are conducted by a provider or are closely linked to the provider.

The IEB gets asked questions about this frequently. Companies with adult education and training centres want to know what training materials to use and which training providers the IEB recommends. They are frustrated when the IEB provides an answer that says, "We do not get involved in provisioning or endorsing specific products or providers".

While it would be easy enough and indeed lucrative to run "exam-coaching" workshops for learners and providers as well as providing focussed assessment exemplars that providers can use to coach learners, this would ignore the importance of separating the summative assessment from provisioning and formative assessment. The IEB would in such instances have a vested interest in ensuring that learners that have gone through these "coaching" initiatives "pass" and hence hinder the IEB from focusing on the use of assessment for the purposes of judging competence with integrity and certification as well as overall quality assurance.

Independent external assessment completely free of any alignment in any way to provisioning, allows the system to meaningfully check whether it is meeting the standards that it has set itself. It gives confidence to the various stakeholders and role-players about the integrity of the results and the certificates that the candidates present. In other words, the system can rely on the fact that the certificates mean associated competence and they are not just pieces of paper.

There is generally no uniformity in the adult education and training sector. The learner profile is wide in terms of age, experience, previous learning and their reasons for undertaking learning. There are learners who went to school but never finished their general schooling while others learnt to read and write through an AET programme in a workplace or community project. Some of the learners are in programmes for personal growth with no intention of progressing further than the ability to read and write and participate in community activities. Others are at the beginning of a pathway towards higher qualifications and better job opportunities.

The quality of the learning programmes is also very different. Some programmes run for months on a fulltime basis while others run for a couple of hours a week for a specified period. The quality of educators in these programmes is also varied with some programmes being run by qualified and experienced educators while others are conducted by inexperienced educators or educators that are not at the required level of competence.

For these reasons, it is important that key players in the adult education and training space insist on the separation of provisioning and assessment – that is the key protection for determining valid and reliable results, determining how well we are doing as a sector and finally for determining what needs to be improved.

The IEB's only interest is in providing quality world-class assessment services and using these to improve the quality of education and training in our country and beyond. In this way learners gain the benefits of qualifications of value, certificates of integrity and a sense of self-confidence from their achievements. This is the transformative nature of assessment that our country requires and our citizens deserve.

Assessment OF learning

Assessment AS learning

Assessment FOR learning

If I were to ask you about the purpose of assessment, what would your answer be? Would you fall within the vast majority that indicate that assessment's purpose is primarily to determine a learner's competence at the end of the learning programme? That response is correct but is rather narrow. Assessment effectively planned and carried out, has a wide range of purposes, the most noble of which is to enhance the teaching practice of facilitators and the learning of learners.

Angelo and Cross (1993) define formative assessment as assessment that is "learner-centred, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context-specific, ongoing and firmly rooted in good practice."

Summative assessment – the assessment purpose most people know about i.e. to determine a learner's competence at the end of the learning programme – only takes place once at the end of the learning programme. There may be tests during a learning programme but the intention generally is a process to obtain a list of marks for the learners. Hence, the very beneficial impact of real formative assessment – assessment used to inform the learners of their progress and give them a clear understanding of what they know and what they do not know – is lost. Correct implementation of formative assessment, is vital for effective learning to take place. Formative assessment is the key process for assessment **AS** and **FOR** learning.

So, what is assessment **FOR** learning and assessment **AS** learning?

When assessment is used **FOR** learning, it establishes a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of multiple assessment tools and methodologies. Assessment of this kind occurs throughout the teaching and learning process and is purposely planned for by the facilitator when designing their learning and teaching activities. Assessment **FOR** learning requires facilitators to share their intentions and the assessment criteria with the learners. This assists both the facilitator and the learners to set their learning goals and monitor their progress against these specific learning goals.

In order to use assessment **FOR** learning effectively it is important that you as a facilitator find out at the start of the learning programme, the level of competence of each of your learners – what knowledge do they bring to your class, what attitudes, perceptions and misconceptions they may have. This will assist you to focus your teaching practices on not only how your learners' learn but also how to correct misunderstanding and re-direct their learning. It is important that you provide constructive feedback on how the learners can improve – a concrete indication of where the key problems lie is far more helpful than simply awarding a mark.

Assessment **AS** learning implies that learners are implicitly responsible for monitoring their own learning by using the feedback that is provided to adjust their understanding, to focus on the areas where their own skills and level of understanding may need improvement. The learners' role and responsibility towards their own learning is firmly

established by the facilitator empowering the learner with the skills to consider different learning strategies if and where necessary. Peer–assessment and self-assessment are very important strategies in building a culture of taking personal responsibility for one's own learning. These processes are part of conducting assessment **AS** learning.

It is vitally important that assessment is implemented **FOR** and **AS** learning in your classes as this is the way you can promote your learners' self-esteem and self-confidence. If your learners understand how they learn and what adjustments they need to make they will develop the skills and passion necessary for lifelong learning. They will also be able to approach the summative assessment – the examination – with confidence.

When you develop your formative assessments it is important that they are set up with the focus being on the quality of the learning that has taken place rather than just the quantity and presentation of the work. Your feedback should be focused more on providing advice for improvement in the learning rather than on grading. Competition between learners may be motivating for some. However it is generally not a good idea to compare learners to each other. Rather compare the most recent performance of a learner with his or her own previous performances – has the learner improved?

You can achieve this by setting rich assessment tasks that are significant, relevant and appropriate to your learners. Each task should integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values inherent in multiple layers of complexity within tasks. Set tasks that ask for multiple solutions and/or strategies to be implemented that in turn will lead to

further discussions and questions. The IEB SBA tasks are rich assessment tasks. Any one task contains a variety of activities – research, discussion, oral and written presentations – connected by an in-depth exploration of a specific topic.

If you incorporate assessment **FOR** and **AS** learning in your classroom situation your learners will cope exceedingly well when it comes to completing the external summative assessments as they will be confident in the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes that will be assessed which in turn will assist them in being able to effectively analyse and answer the questions. Implementing assessment **FOR** and **AS** learning will, demand, in itself, that more attention is given to when and how you conduct formative assessment as well as how you provide feedback to the learners but the results will be far more rewarding for all.

So when you mark work, ask yourselves the following two questions: "What is this learner doing well?" and "Where can he or she improve?" Your answers to these questions will shortly show improvements in your learners' results.



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