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Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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Rhodes University BANKSETA M&E Chair Research Plan: Project 1

TITLE OF RESEARCH	<i>Project 1: Develop a High Level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for SETAs</i>
CONTRACT NUMBER	<i>475.4710.644</i>
START DATE	<i>23 July 2018</i>
END DATE	<i>1 March 2020</i>
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PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This project will develop a high level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for all SETAs and support all other components of the Research Chair in M&E for a SETA Environment. The high level framework is to be used by DHET, SETAs themselves and parties appointed, to continuously monitor and regularly evaluate the functioning of SETAs and their impact on social development and economic participation. The framework must enable SETAs to be accountable to their stakeholders and in equal measure, to learn from M&E findings in order to increase their positive impact within their sphere of influence.

While post-school education and training (PSET) cannot take full responsibility for jobs, employment rates and economic wellbeing, inadequate skills among the general population is a significant factor that constrains both social and economic development in South Africa. A considerable portion of the Fiscus, much effort and goodwill is invested in PSET, but the outcomes are still inadequate. SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) are important roleplayers in the PSET system and share the responsibility for improving the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of skills development in South Africa.

How to do this, however? M&E is required and SETAs do undertake monitoring and ad hoc evaluations, they collect data and submit numerous reports both on schedule and in response to ad hoc requests. Sayer also reminds us that “as sentient beings, capable of flourishing and suffering, and particularly vulnerable to how other treat us, our view of the world is substantially evaluative in nature”. Yet current M&E process do not seem to provide enough insight into how to make the SETAs more efficient, effective and impactful. While the roleplayers have substantial reporting loads, we nonetheless do not learn enough from the data and reporting effort, and/or fail to use what we have learnt, to improve outcomes.

One problem is that there is inadequate synergy, including misalignment between various M&E systems and between the SETAs themselves. Secondly, the data collected seems at times unstrategic, and inadequately managed. Thirdly, the M&E frameworks in place tend to focus on performance monitoring and compliance, with less attention to evaluation and learning about what works, and why, and what does not work, and why. And when we do evaluate, we tend to evaluate initiatives in isolation from the wider system.

This project is an opportunity to develop an aligned, implementable M&E framework that sees post-school education and training (PSET) as a system and supports systemic and institutional learning as much as accountability. Previous initiatives aimed at achieving an overarching framework will be considered, and efforts made to overcome their limitations. This may need to include early onboarding of all key roleplayers, and change management processes possible within the scope of the research chair. Finally, the framework should be broad enough to be also used (or include principles that can be used) in a future PSET landscape.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

High Level Research Questions

1. What should SETAs monitor and evaluate in the complex system of PSET in SA?
2. How can SETAs realistically conduct this M&E?
3. How can the PSET system as a whole optimally learn from M&E in a SETA environment?

Sub-Questions

1. What is the theory of change guiding the SETAs in general, the associated logical framework, results framework and outcomes maps?
2. What are the associated generic indicators of success at outcome and impact levels? (bearing in mind the DHET framework)
3. What are the generic evaluation questions related to quality, relevance, impact and sustainability (bearing in mind the DHET framework) and how should they be addressed? This should be guided by a broader question: How best do we find value?
4. Should SETAs develop their own aligned theories of change, logical frameworks, indicators and evaluation questions, and if so, how?
5. What is the most efficient and meaningful way to report against indicators and what are the associated challenges?
6. How can other methods e.g. evaluative case studies, address the limitations of indicator-based monitoring, and what are the associated challenges?
7. How can a cost-benefit analysis tool be integrated into M&E frameworks?
8. How can tracer studies be integrated into M&E frameworks?
9. How can project evaluations be included in the M&E framework?
10. How can performance assessment be linked to overall M&E?
11. Can a realist evaluation method be used to optimise systemic learning and if not, what are the alternative frameworks for designing evaluations?
12. On the basis of all the above, what would an integrated M&E framework for SETAs look like?
13. How should this framework be implemented and what are the associated requirements?

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

According to SETAs this is not the first attempt to develop an overarching M&E framework for SETAs. The reasons why other attempts have not been fully satisfactory should be identified; at that point it will be clear whether this proposed research is in a position to overcome historical limitations. A change management process may be needed, but the Chair is not in a position to closely manage the change process of adopting a new M&E framework. The budget for this particular project puts limitations on the scope of what can be achieved e.g. numbers of researchers and facilitators that can be appointed and resourced. The prevailing systems may also put limitations on the extent to which an innovative system, or a system which fundamentally addresses problems, can be proposed.

METHODS	INSTRUMENTS	DATA SOURCES	LOCATION
Desk top research: Literature (will be conducted throughout the study but particularly in the early stages)	Literature will be sourced from the university and DHET library and archives, own publications, online resources.	Will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniels, H., Edwards, A., Engeström, Y., Gallagher, Ludvigsen, S.R. 2019. <i>Activity Theory in Practice. Promoting learning across boundaries and agencies.</i> Routledge, London. • Funnel, S. and Rogers, P. 2011. <i>Purposeful program theory: Effective use of theories of change and logic models.</i> Wiley Online. • Patton, M.Q., 2010. <i>Developmental evaluation. Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use.</i> Guilford, NY. • Pawson, R. and Tilley, 1997. <i>Realistic evaluation.</i> Sage, London. • Sauls, G. Evaluation of the National Skills Authority. PhD thesis, Rhodes University. • Sayer, A. 2011. <i>Why Things Matter to People. Social science, values and ethical life.</i> Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. • Sayer, A. 2002. <i>Method in Social Science: A realist approach.</i> Routledge, London. • Weiss, C., 1997. <i>Theory-based evaluation. Past, present and future.</i> Wiley Online. 	Rhodes University, Grahamstown
Desk top research: Policies (conducted early in the study to inform the Scoping Report)	Policies will be sourced in the first instance through the SETA Collaborative Research Working Group and DHET	Relevant M&E frameworks of the DHET, DPME, NSA, existing SETA frameworks; frameworks used in other countries for comparative purposes	Rhodes

Interviews with key informants (conducted throughout)	Semi-structured interview guides; to map the M&E system and practices and seek to understand what works well, issues, challenges, and past proposals and efforts to address them	Face to face and remote interviews with Treasury, DPME, DHET, NSA, SETAs. BankSETA and DHET will be required to assist in opening these doors.	Gauteng
Focus groups (conducted throughout the study; facilitated by the project lead with support, and recorded)	Used for ongoing SETA engagement and an expansive learning process; data gathering on what is, what is absent, what should be there and how it could be achieved, member checking (of interpretations) and review of products (draft framework)	Relevant representatives from the organisations listed above; in particular research and M&E staff; to deliberate how best to overcome issues and challenges; what changes would be feasible and appropriate; and how to drive them; what tools and resources as well as capacity building would be needed. Arranged with support from the BANKSETA and the SETA Collaborative Research Working Group. A regular 2-hour slot in the monthly SETAs Collaborative Research Working Group is proposed.	Gauteng Dates of WG meetings: 31 August (Wits), 28 Sept, 26 October, 30 Nov 2018; 2019 to be decided
Discourse analysis	To trace the transformational intent in the SA policy and M&E frameworks	Will draw on methodology used by Harris, J. 2000. <i>RPL: Power, Pedagogy and Possibility</i> . HSRP Press, Cape Town; and the analysis of bureaucratic systems in Graeber, D. 2015 <i>The Utopia of Rules</i> . Melville House, London.	Rhodes
Analytic review and framework development	Using a critical realist framework of what is there, what is absent, what should be and how could it be achieved.	Based on all above sources. A think tank will be established to ensure that the thinking is innovative yet grounded in the realities on the ground.	Rhodes and Gauteng

Financial reporting largely falls outside the scope of this study.

HIGH LEVEL RISKS

Risk	Risk level	Risk Management Strategy/Mitigation	Responsible person
Availability of data	H	Ensure that data availability is not a critical factor in the success of the development of the framework, i.e. build on available data and work around what is not available.	ER with SETAs and DHET
Access to respondents, data sources	H	Work through senior contacts in DHET; set up meetings long in advance; identify opportunities such as conferences and colloquia attended by key stakeholders and arrangement attendant meetings.	ER with SETAs and DHET
Proliferation of similar initiatives	H	Identify reasons why other similar attempts have not been entirely successful, and use the information to benefit the current study	ER with SETAs and DHET

Buy-in from stakeholders	H	Work through senior contacts in DHET as well as the SETAs' Collaborative Research Working Group.	ER with SETAs and DHET
Too big a scope, mission creep and not completing on time	H	Be realistic in the scope of what can be achieved; identify the requirements of all possible role players and manage their expectations through regular communications and feedback.	ER with SETAs and DHET

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS

SAMPLE AND POPULATION:

The high level M&E framework has to align with the frameworks of the DHET and DPME, and preferably also those of the NSA, NSFAS and HRDC where relevant. Therefore, these entities should be consulted early in the study. The sample will be based on key informants and to some extent snowballing; where one key informant may identify another for further interviewing. The envisaged sample for high level interviews is 10.

The sample will also include the research managers and M&E representatives of SETAs and where relevant, SETA CEOs. In addition, a sample of around 50% of the SETA research managers (i.e. 10) and M&E coordinators (10) will be interviewed. Finally, 2-3 researchers who have previously evaluated or developed M&E frameworks in the SETA environment will be interviewed, in particular those involved in the recent evaluation of the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS, III).

Contact list of Possible Respondents

Organisation	Name of Respondent	Contact Number	Contact Email Address
DHET Directorate: Planning, Policy and Strategy	Dr Hersheela Narsee Acting Deputy Director General	012 312 5657	Narsee.H@dhet.gov.za
DHET Directorate: Policy, Research and Evaluation	Rakal Govender Acting Director	012 312 5657	Govender.R@dhet.gov.za
National Skills Authority	Dr Thabo Mabogoane; Ms Olwethu Nyewe	c/o 012 312 5300 Mohlakoana.R@dhet.gov.za	Mabogoane.T@dhet.gov.za nyewe.o@dhet.gov.za
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Presidency: Dept of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation	Dr Ian Goldman, Head of Evaluation and Research Unit; Antonio Hercules, Evaluation Director		ian@presidency-dpme.gov.za antonio@presidency-dpme.gov.za
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RESEARCH REPORT OUTLINE:

Title: *A High Level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for SETAs*

Executive Summary

Acknowledgements and Citations

Chapter 1: Background to the Study

Chapter 2: Research Process

Chapter 3: Review of Existing Research

Chapter 4: Theory of Change, Logical Frameworks and Outcomes Mapping

Chapter 5: Monitoring: Identifying, Defining and Working with Indicators

Chapter 6: Evaluation: Alternatives to Complement Indicator Based M&E

Chapter 7: Incorporation of Tracer and Tracker Studies

Chapter 8: Incorporation of Cost-Benefit Analyses and Return on Investment

Chapter 9: Recommended Overarching M&E Framework

Chapter 10: Requirements for Implementation

Bibliography/References

OTHER DELIVERABLES

- **Masters Research Plan** – This document will guide the research; details may from time to time be revised in consultation with BANKSETA, if changes are required by changes on the ground or important insights
- **Scoping Report** – details of what will be included in and excluded from the study, and further details of the organisations and individuals to be included in the study; existing and international frameworks to be considered; policy frameworks; and a map of M&E in the SETA environment as an activity system.
- **M&E Framework** – this will be included in the research report, but also summarised in a shorter, user friendly ‘pull-out’ document with diagrammatic outlines.
- **Guidelines for Integration and Implementation** – also included in the research report, and pull-out.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Tranche	Deliverables	Invoice Date	Amount	Amount inclusive of VAT
1 (25%)	Master Research Plan Approved	23 July 2018		R163 500.00
2 (25%)	Scoping Report	31 January 2019		R163 500.00
3 (20%)	M&E Framework	30 Oct 2019		R130 000.00
4 (20%)	Guidelines for Integration and Implementation	30 January 2020		R130 000.00
5 (10%)	Close out Report	01 March 2020		R 65 400.00
	Total Amount			R652 400.00

DETAILED RESEARCH PLAN

Stage of Research	Activities	Outputs/ Deliverables	Timeframe		Resources Required
			Start	Finish	
1	Finalise Research Plan	Master Research Plan Approved	July 2018	July 2018	Budget for travel during set-up
2	Conduct desk top studies and key informant interviews	Scoping Report	August 2018	January 2019	Access to documents and contacts; travel budget; research time
3	Further desk top studies, interviews and focus groups; writing up framework and draft tools	M&E Framework	January 2019	Oct 2019	Access to documents and contacts; travel and meeting budget (venues, catering); research time
4	Focus groups with key stakeholders; integration of other tools (CBA Tool, Tracer Protocols, etc.) and development of guidelines	Guidelines for Integration	Nov 2019	Jan 2020	Access to documents and contacts; travel and meeting budgets (venues, catering); research time; feedback
5	Produce and present final report	Close out Report	Feb 2020	March 2020	Writing time; travel budget; presentation opportunity