

12 Criteria for Judging the Elements of Open and Distance-Learning Programs in Teacher Education

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INSTRUMENT 12

Twelve aspects of open and distance-learning programs are analyzed on a five-point scale that ranges from poor to excellent. These criteria, initially drawn up as part of the national audit process in South Africa, relate specifically to teacher education. The criteria can be used both in the development of programs and in the evaluation process.

1. Clarity of purpose
2. Compatibility of objectives with overall purpose
3. Student knowledge and experience of schools and teaching are exploited
4. Accuracy of text: up-to-date citation of contemporary research and scholarships
5. Teacher-education-syllabus requirements are fulfilled
6. Course employs students' prior knowledge
7. Text style
8. Material design
9. Audio-visual media (where provided) is appropriately used
10. Assessment strategy
11. Activities as stimuli to student learning
12. Model learning environment created

The following are assessment grades for each of the criteria given above. These grades are designed to provide an objective scale for judgments concerning the standard of any open or distance-learning course.

1. Clarity of Purpose:

- 1.1 Students are not introduced to the purpose of the course; there is no reflection on purpose in the course content or course conclusion.
- 1.2 The purpose of the course is stated, although terms are rooted in course content with no reference to student learning or outcomes. Little subsequent reference is made to purpose.

- 1.3 Students are given a statement of course purpose, covering content and expectations of learning outcomes. There are some subsequent references to this preliminary statement.
- 1.4 Course content and most expectations of learning outcomes are articulated at the outset of the course, and adequate subsequent references are made to the preliminary statement.
- 1.5 The purpose of the course is clearly stated at the outset and is comprehensive in enunciating course content and expectations of learning outcomes. Students are drawn back to purpose statements throughout the course and in summary conclusions (an indication of progression to subsequent areas of study).

2. Compatibility of Objectives with Overall Purpose

- 1.1 No attempt is made to express interim objectives for students either in terms of the material presented or in learning outcomes.
- 1.2 An attempt is made to set out objectives. This is incomprehensive and insufficiently related to statements of course content and learning outcomes.
- 2.3 Statement of objective is made but is incomprehensive in covering course content and learning outcomes. Some reference to this is made in interim and summary statements.
- 2.4 Objectives for the course are clearly articulated in relation to course content and learning outcomes. Reference is made to these objectives throughout the course although they are not fully exploited as a basis for planning future student learning.
- 2.5 Objectives are explicitly stated. They are clearly related to purpose and cover course content and learning outcomes. These objectives are used in interim summary statements and in overall conclusions as prompts for future student learning.

3. Student Knowledge and Experience of Schools and Teaching Are Exploited

- 3.1 Little systematic attempt is made to use relevant student knowledge and skills in the teaching context.

- 3.2 Sporadic references are made to teaching and school context but with no opportunities for students to draw on their own personal knowledge.
- 3.3 Teaching or school context is used systematically, but students are not called on to draw on their own personal experiences or contexts.
- 3.4 Teaching or school context is used systematically with some references to students' personal experiences.
- 3.5 The course, in general, fully exploits teaching and learning contexts, and more specifically, the students' personal school and teaching experiences. Activities and assessment strategies also draw on experiential learning.

4. Accuracy of Text: Up-to-Date Citation of Contemporary Research and Scholarship

- 4.1 There are several errors of fact and interpretation in text, oversimplification to the point of inaccuracy, and no evidence of recent research or scholarship.
- 4.2 There are some errors of fact and interpretation with little or no reference to recent research or scholarship.
- 4.3 There is adequate exposition, few errors of fact or interpretation, and some references to recent research and scholarship.
- 4.4 There is good synthesis of the subject matter, no errors of fact or interpretation, and adequate references to recent research and scholarship.
- 5.5 Clear exposition introduces students to the subject as a whole; there is explicit reference to recent research and scholarship and indicators for subsequent follow up.

5. Teacher-Education Syllabus Requirements Are Fulfilled

- 5.1 The course is weakly related to syllabus requirements. There are large gaps in content and no attempts to develop learning beyond minimum syllabus requirements.
- 5.2 The course meets syllabus requirements but does so unevenly and often superficially. There is no development beyond minimum requirements.

- 5.3 The course fully covers syllabus requirements but with few opportunities for interested students to advance beyond the expected average.
- 4.4 The course imaginatively covers the syllabus and offers some opportunities (unevenly distributed) for individual students to exceed the minimum requirements.
- 4.5 The course fully covers all aspects of the relevant syllabus and exploits opportunities for syllabus expansion that can extend individual student learning.

6. Course Employs Students' Prior Knowledge

- 6.1 Course makes no reference to students' prior skills and understanding.
- 2.2 Course makes no reference to individual students' skills and understanding. Some general reference is made to course assumptions about skills.
- 2.3 Course makes general assumptions about students' prior skills and understanding. There is some discussion as to how this can be exploited with reference to individual student experience.
- 2.4 Course articulates assumptions about students' previous skills and understanding with some reference to how this can be exploited with reference to individual students.
- 2.5 Course fully articulates assumptions about prior skills and experience of the student group as a whole and mediates by fully exploiting individual student experience.

7. Text Style

- 7.1 The text is impersonal; the language is uneven and poor with recourse to jargon and unexplained technical terms. Text may be sexist.
- 7.2 The text is impersonal; the language is adequate although sentences may be convoluted and obscure, and not all technical terms are explained. Text may be sexist.
- 7.3 The text attempts to address the learner directly, but the attempt is uneven as is the consistency of expression and explanation. Text is gender neutral.

- 7.4 The text directly addresses the learner; the language is concise and informative. There is an attempt to establish an active style of expressing ideas and activities, but this is not systematically sustained throughout the course. The text is gender neutral.
- 7.5 The text directly addresses the learner in plain and friendly language. Explanations are clear and technical terms are fully defined. Ideas and activities are expressed in an active and engaging way. The author varies voice (conversational, expository, or challenging) and establishes a strong rapport with learner. The text is gender neutral.

8. Material Design

- 8.1 There is little evidence of planning in design; the text and page layout are cramped. There are few, if any, illustrations or diagrams and, where these do exist, appear disjunctive with the text. Cover design is dull.
- 8.2 There is some structure in layout design, but pages are still cramped. Diagrams and illustrations are poor with uneven reference to text discussion. Cover design is dull.
- 8.3 Visual quality of text is good but spacing, illustrations, and diagrams are insufficient to maximize student motivation. Cover design is adequate.
- 8.4 Visual quality of text is good, and thought is given to spacing, illustrations, and diagrams, and their overall relation to the text. Cover design is good, but there is no use of color.
- 8.5 Structure of the course is immediately apparent through organized use of headings and icons. Cover, binding, and packaging are visually appealing. There is a purposeful use of color.

9. Audio-Visual Media (where provided) Is Appropriately Used

- 9.1 Audio-visual material is unrelated to text with poor explanation of how media relates to course objectives. Quality of media is merely "talking text."
- 9.2 Audio-visual material has limited relation to text, but lacks connection with any student activities. There is some attempt to use media in ways distinct from written text.

- 9.3 There is adequate use of audio-visual material for the distinct purpose of enhancing in-text student activities. Quality of media is uneven; there is little evidence of creative input by specialist media producers or designers.
- 9.4 Audio-visual material is fully integrated within course design and with other resources. Some specialist input is evident in program making.
- 9.5 There is a highly professional production of audio-visual material (comparable to that of an established public broadcasting corporation). The audio-visual media is fully integrated with other resources and course design.

10. Assessment Strategy

- 10.1 There are no opportunities for continuous, formative, self-evaluative assessment. Summative assessment is limited in range and insufficiently measures learning in relation to course objectives.
- 10.2 There are few opportunities for continuous, formative, self-evaluative assessment. Summative assessment unevenly measures learning in relation to course objectives.
- 10.3 There are adequate opportunities for continuous, formative, self-evaluative assessment. Summative procedures measure a substantial proportion of learning as related to course objectives.
- 10.4 There is good continuous, formative, self-evaluative assessment. Well-designed summative assessment fully measures learning related to course objectives.
- 10.5 There is a clear structure of continuous, formative, self-evaluative assessment showing appropriate progression into summative assessment design that is imaginatively constructed and fully measures learning related to course objectives.

11. Activities as Stimuli to Student Learning

- 11.1 There are few in-text activities, and those that exist are poorly related to course content. There is no reference to students' personal knowledge and no school-based activity.

- 11.2 Activities are set, but these are uniform in character, draw unevenly from the text, and do not exploit the students' personal knowledge of schools and teaching.
- 11.3 Activities are set that are related to the text. There is some attempt to make reference to and use students' personal, school, and teaching contexts.
- 11.4 There are well-planned, structured, and varied activities, including appropriate school-based ones that are systematically related to text and make substantive attempt to engage students' personal knowledge of school and teaching context.
- 11.5 Well-planned, structured, and varied activities include school- and classroom-based activities that develop from the course and students' personal knowledge of school and teaching contexts. Activities are related to overall model of formative assessment and self-evaluation.

12. Model Learning Environment Is Created

- 12.1 There is a limited range of resources with no personal "in-course" student support and little, if any, exploitation of students' personal experience in the educational context. There is no evidence of evaluation or revision.
- 12.2 There is a limited range of resources with minimal and uneven "in-course" student support and limited exploitation of students' personal experience in the educational context. There is little evidence of evaluation and revision.
- 12.3 There is an adequate range of resources supplemented by "in-course" student support, and some exploitation of students' personal experience in an educational context. There is some indication that the course seeks to establish a learning environment congruent with best practice in students' own teaching context. Evaluation systems are in place but are poorly integrated with course revision.
- 12.4 There is a good range of resources supplemented with well-structured and monitored "in-course" student support. Student knowledge and expertise is fully exploited. Course seeks to establish systematically a learning environment congruent with best practice in students' own teaching context. Evaluation systems are in place that encompass course revision.

Fully developed and imaginatively constructed resources are developed within a course framework that provides student support and exploits students' personal experience in an educational context. Course activities and assessment systematically seek to raise standards of student "in-school" achievement. The learning fully mirrors best practice in students' own teaching context. Fully operative quality-assurance and evaluation systems are in place.