

# The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland



## Ministry of Education and Training

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### Report on the Proposed Rehabilitation and Expansion of Open and Distance Learning at EMLalatini Development Centre

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#### Introduction

The provision of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is a pre-condition to ensuring that the international goals on making education accessible to all, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Education For All (EFA) targets and the country's own developmental goals as articulated in the National Development Strategy (Vision 2022) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan (PRSAP). In formal settings, the conventional (face-to-face schooling instruction) and distance education delivered through an array of methods that are more flexible in terms of location, time and pace, yet cheaper and yield improved results, have been used jointly to provide educational opportunities to recipients. Over the years, Governments have increasingly realized that the financial resources available for conventional schooling fall short of the increased demand for education and training. ODL therefore provides an amicable solution to ensuring that Governments reach the presently unreachable and provide educational access to all.

The definition and application of ODL has been revolving over the years. Currently, by the Common Wealth of Learning standards, it embraces any or all of the following:

- *Open learning*: These are processes and practices that permit entry to learning with no or minimum barriers with respect to age, gender, or time constraints and with recognition of prior learning.
- *Online learning and e-learning*: These refer to the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance distance education, implement open learning policies, make learning activities more flexible and enable such learning activities to be distributed through an array of learning centres or venues.
- *Distance education*: This being the delivery of learning or training to recipients separated in terms of physical location of instructors and students and time. The teaching is done through a variety of 'mediating processes' used to transmit content, to provide tuition and to conduct assessment or measure outcomes.
- *Virtual education*: This method includes aspects of online and e-learning but goes further to include the use of multimedia and enables high levels of interaction among

learners, content, teachers, peers and administration, both synchronously and asynchronously.

- *Flexible learning*: This refers to the provision of learning opportunities that can be accessed at any place and time. Flexible learning relates more to the scheduling of activities than any particular delivery method.

The importance of strengthening ODL systems in countries all over the world cannot be over-emphasised. Swaziland, like many other developing countries has a mammoth task of providing access to education for all, including the youth and adults. The output levels at primary education level are enormous and these will be further fuelled by the initiatives implemented by Government aimed at reducing the costs of education at this level. The Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers of Education and Training also recognized the need for Governments to implement, strengthen and maintain ODL systems at all education levels. The Malta Declaration on Networking the Commonwealth for Development, signed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at the meeting held in Malta in 2005 underscored the need to use ICT in bridging the digital divide among the Commonwealth's developed and developing countries, particularly in the area of ODL.

### **Current Status of Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC)**

ODL, as clearly articulated in the introduction above presents a promising and practical strategy to address the challenge of widening access thus increasing participation in strategically earmarked levels of education. In many country countries, it has been used as a cost-effective and non-quality sacrificing delivery model to increase participation in higher education. In the country however, it is targeted at three main population groups, i.e., secondary education, employed and non-employed adults and higher education

Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC) an institution that offers what is termed Open and Distance Learning (ODL) for Basic Education and Non-formal Education, except that the basic education provided is not limited to Junior secondary level but covers forms 4 and 5 as well (i.e. junior and senior secondary education). As clearly articulated in its mission, the centre offers a quality and affordable secondary education opportunity to out-of-school children as well as employed and non-employed adults, who cannot attend conventional classes for various reasons through face-to-face and distance learning delivery systems. So far, there are two institutions that offer Open and Distance Learning programs in the country and these are the University of Swaziland, through the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) programme and EDC. This report however will confine itself to EDC.

The curriculum followed at EDC is the same as the one followed in formal secondary schools with learning materials converted to a distance learning mode for ease of use by the learners. Hence, EDC programs respond to the needs of diverse learners from those requiring a second chance to those who seek to upgrade their examination grades to improve chances for university and/or technical and Vocational Education and Training and Skills Development (TVETSD) entry.

The institution offers programmes at three qualification levels namely: Junior Certificate, O' level /IGCSE and HIGCSE (matric equivalent). Even though the curriculum offered at EDC, is the same as in the conventional schools, the range of subjects provided is limited. The only subjects that one can pursue at the institution are: English Language, SiSwati, Mathematics, Biology, Integrated Science,

Geography, History, Bookkeeping, Accounts and Economics. EDC students take the same examination as that taken by students in conventional schools. The institution delivers its programmes mainly through the print medium (workbooks) and its teaching and learning materials are developed and printed in-house. Thereafter the modules are revised and updated on an ongoing basis by the subject tutors. Other support mechanisms used to complement the modules are:

- Face to face tutorials held at certain intervals throughout the year.
- Radio programmes, which are only used by the English department. These are written and produced over the radio by the subject tutors.
- In distance education constant interactions has to be made with the learners. For communication purposes EDC use the telephone and the postal services.

### **Challenges in the Delivery of ODL in EDC**

- *Inadequate access to EDC programmes:* The 2010 Education Sector Analysis Report prepared by the World Bank reveals that the current coverage of the centre, in terms of provision of open and distance learning programmes for out-of-school, employed and non-employed adults is too low relative to that of other small population countries such as Namibia and Botswana.
- *Narrow Curriculum:* EDC is still providing a narrow curriculum that does not meet the students' needs. EDC is therefore challenged to diversify its curriculum.
- *Scope to be broadened to cover Primary Education:* A large number of students who did not finish their Primary level Education are coming to EDC for assistance. This has then put a challenge for developing an ODL programme for Upper primary. This programme can also compliment the Sebenta Non-formal Upper Primary Education (NUPE ).
- *Strengthening of existing programmes:* Strengthening the J.C and SGCSE Science programme by upgrading the Science laboratory.
- *Outreach centres need to be revived:* To increase the access of EDC by reviving the study centres, in the Rural Education Centres (REC)
- *Upgrading and rehabilitating physical infrastructure:* To upgrade and/or rehabilitate the physical infrastructure, mainly the buildings and water supply
- *Replacement/Revamping of course development equipment:* The course development equipment needs to be revamped and replaced. This includes computers and printing equipment.
- *Unavailability of s Student Support Department:* Establish a full fledged student support department. This entails creation of a Student Advisor post.

### **Key Strategic Interventions**

In view of the challenges indicated above, the key strategic interventions aimed at turning things around at the centre and making it more responsive to the needs of the people of Swaziland, the Ministry has identified four strategic areas of intervention, bulleted as follows:

- *Upgrading facilities to strengthen existing and introduce new open and distance education delivery systems:* this is critical in ensuring that the centre is able to keep up with the latest or modern ODL delivery systems that will in turn make it possible for it to reach out to more people, put in place a cost-effective delivery mechanism and lead to quality results. It involves looking at the current and new trends in the delivery mechanisms employed and the most practical ways of introducing new delivery methods where necessary.
- *To increase the size of the academic and non-academic staff in order to increase the number of subjects the institution offers:* Expansion of the scope of EMLalati Development Centre would definitely require an increase in the size and quality of the academic personnel and a corresponding boost in the size of the non-academic personnel. The reality is that, in terms of access, EDC is not absorbing enough means that space has to be created to allow for more students to enroll and thus requiring more instructors (teachers) and additional auxiliary staff to keep up with the demand for both academic and support services.
- *Establishment of Information Communication and Technology (ICT):* Both conventional and distance education programmes are dependent on good communication for successful; learning to take place. Good communication promotes needed interactions (teacher to teacher, teacher to student and student to student) in the teaching and learning environment. There is an array of communication and technology tools available for the delivery of open and distance learning programmes and these do not only need to allow for the interaction of learners and instructors but also makes it imperative to use media.
- *Establishment of Research and Evaluation Systems for quality control purposes:* Research on world experiences and trends in new ODL models and evaluation of existing systems are key in ensuring that the quality of education provided is up to scratch.
- *Expansion, Rehabilitation and Upgrading of EDC infrastructure and facilities:* This will allow for the broadening of scope and functions of the centre in carrying out its mandate using cost-effective, modern and reliable open and distance education delivery systems.
- *Diversification of EDC Curriculum to Cover More Subjects and to amplify the scope of EDC to cover primary education provision as well.*
- *Creation of Necessary Support Mechanisms:* This involves the establishment of outreach centres and support structures such as the Student Support Department to ensure that the programmes offered by EDC are decentralized and that these programmes address the needs of the students, who could be out-of-school children and employed and un-employed adults.

**Proposed Plan for the Broadening of the Scope of EMLalatini Development Centre (EDC)**

Key Strategic Intervention	Planned Activities	Year 2011/2012				Year 2012/2013				Year 2013/2014				Year 2014/2015				Year 2015/2016				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<i>1. Upgrading facilities to strengthen existing and introduce new open and distance education delivery systems</i>	Engagement of a consultant to assess the available ODL facilities at EMLalatini Development Centre (EDC)																					
	Development of a strategy for the upgrading of facilities at EDC (highlighting all possible modes of ODL delivery) to strengthen existing and introduce new ODL programmes																					
	Submission of proposal to upgrade facilities at EDC																					
	Implementation of strategy for the upgrading of facilities to upgrade the facilities at EDC																					
<i>2. Expansion, Rehabilitation and Upgrading of EDC infrastructure and facilities</i>	Submission of budget proposal for the expansion, rehabilitation and upgrading of EDC infrastructure and facilities																					

Key Strategic Intervention	Planned Activities	Year 2011/2012				Year 2012/2013				Year 2013/2014				Year 2014/2015				Year 2015/2016			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Implementation of programme for the expansion, rehabilitation and upgrading of infrastructure at EDC																				
3. <i>Broadening of EDC Curriculum</i>	Review of EDC Curriculum to increase the scope of subjects offered by the centre																				
	Introduction of new subjects in curriculum offered by EDC																				
4. <i>Broadening of ECD scope to cover Primary Education</i>	Review of the scope of EDC in terms of allowing its mandate to cover primary education programmes																				
	Introduction of primary education programmes at EDC																				
5. <i>To increase the size of the academic and non-academic staff in order to increase the number of subjects the institution offers:</i>	Submission of request for posts to the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC)																				
	Creation of Posts for additional academic and non-academic staff at EDC																				

	Filling of posts for the additional required staff																					
6. <i>Establishment of Information Communication and Technology (ICT):</i>	Engagement of a consultant to assess the needs of EDC in terms of ICT needs and networking strategy for EDC to be able to effectively deliver its programmes and decentralize them to the communities																					
	Submission of budget proposal for the development of ICT mechanisms for effective communication and networking by EDC in the delivery of its programmes																					
7. <i>Establishment of Research and Evaluation Systems for quality control purposes:</i>																						
8. <i>Creation of Necessary Support Mechanisms:</i>																						

