The Brave New World? Issues of governance and sustainable ODL provisioning in South Africa

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Abstract

The key focus of this paper is on concerted efforts by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training to usher in a new dispensation for ODL provisioning at a policy level, supported by more rigorous instruments for funding allocations, especially with regard to teaching development. A governance and sustainability lens is used to examine the policy intentions and unresolved tensions of promoting ODL in the South African context. Governance is conceived of as a complex web of structural arrangements, relationships and participatory policy-formulation processes at national and institutional levels. The legislative framework scripts institutional identities and purposes and their relation to the wider system. A number of innovations are interrogated and critiqued, with special regard to shared learning resources and more meaningful institutional collaboration in order to give expression to a differentiated, diverse and coherent system. In conclusion, the new categories and criteria for the independent earmarked teaching development grants are examined with regard to their potential impacts on transforming ODL teaching practices.

Key words: Policy intent, unresolved tensions, accountability, sustainability, categories and criteria for teaching development, transforming ODL teaching practices