

## SAQA KRG DRAFT MANAGEMENT LETTER, 2012

To the DGs, DBE and DHET

As can be seen from the comprehensive report on the moderation of the results of KRG for 2012, there is a strong endorsement of the continuing human value of the project. SAQA's independent visitors to a sample of 300 of the 30000 sites were overwhelmingly impressed by the local teams and the positive feeling of the learners about the value of KRG to them. The few critical observations and negative feedback provide some useful pointers to possible improvements in management, but these appear in a small minority of reports.

The report not only supports the overall model of KRG, but praises the excellence of the logistics and the management of data. There is, however, reason for concern that the delays in authorisation of the delivery contracts by the DBE in 2012 meant that the programme was shortened in many places, leading to signs of perfunctoriness. This may have limited the quality of quality assurance as reflected in the points below. (Reports that the programme may start even later in 2013 because of similar procedural delays raise serious concern.)

SAQA has approved the recording of the results of successful participants on the NLRD. This is on the basis of the moderation of the marking of the portfolios which was as reliable as in previous years, and possibly slightly more so.

Nonetheless, we must qualify our positive approval on a number of grounds:

### **Need to review the approach to assessment in KRG**

Our major concern relates to the problem of the serious lack of correlation between the results on the verification tests conducted during site visits, and the identical or similar tasks in the portfolio. We find it difficult to interpret this and recognise that it might partly be ascribed to our instruments. As can be seen in the discussion in the report, the issues are complex.

The problem can probably, however, be attributed to the weak validity of portfolios generally in the certification of formal educational outcomes. In addition, we suspect that the non-formal aspect of the staffing of KRG means that the portfolios are even less reliable than one might expect in a highly professional context. There are good educational reasons to continue the portfolio approach as is, but credible certification should preferably be based on an approach with more convincing validity. Whatever the case, there is a need to re-visit the approach to the national assessment of KRG.

### **Need for renewal and extension of the programme**

KRG has been conducted for five years with only trivial revisions or improvements to its materials and approach. There are at least two problems with this that seriously impact on the quality assurance of KRG:

1. In terms of the portfolio itself, the fact that it is virtually unchanged in content is problematic. This poses the same difficulties that would arise if public examination papers were identical each year. Previous requests by SAQA for at least changes to the specific content of tasks in the portfolios (such as the numbers in sums) have not been acted on. In addition, we would recommend that the assessment marking criteria in the portfolios be made simpler, more consistent and more comparable. (The present scaling may be a reason for the difficulty of determining the correlations.) The educators also need thorough training in the handling of the assessment.
2. The widespread demand from learners and educators for further levels for KRG or for increasing the time available for the programme points to a need for revision, renewal and growth. The programme is almost certainly too ambitious for completion in six months by genuinely illiterate and innumerate adults. At the same time, the many poorly educated, but not illiterate, adults in the community have a need for a KRG-type programme which takes them beyond the basics. Without renewal, improvement and growth, the programme is destined to become stale. Already the SAQA Senior Verifiers suspect that communities may be contriving to repeat the programme in a ritual way, with social and small material benefits, but with little cognitive effect.

### **Warning signs regarding management and morale**

The SAQA Senior Verifiers report a significant loss in morale on the part of the 200 coordinators who participated in the moderation and verification of KRG in 2013. This is almost inevitable after five years in which the subject of moderation is so little changed. However, the 2013 event was not only characterised by a certain boredom, but also by a sense of rebellion which seemed to have its roots in sometimes bitter discontent with **current** national management of the project. Tone, motivation and inner discipline were well down on previous years. Although this points to broader problems requiring evaluation - which goes beyond the terms of reference of the SAQA team - the issue also impacts on the effectiveness of the quality assurance.

Given the enormous benefits of KRG, and even more of its possibility as the basis for further levels of adult education as envisaged in the planning for a post-school system, there would seem to be strong reasons for attending urgently to the issues raised in this letter.