



End-term Review - Executive summary

Building Academic Partnerships for
Economic Development (BAPED)

South Africa

SAF 1608811

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COTA Asbl (Ref. 19001)

Final Report – June 2019

This review is realised as part of the cooperation between South Africa and Belgium.

This report has been drawn up by an independent external expert.

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Enabel, the Belgian Development Cooperation, or the authorities of the countries concerned.

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1. Presentation of the evaluation

It was the general aim of the Building Academic Partnerships for Economic Development (BAPED) to contribute to the economic development of South Africa through the establishment of a network between South-African and Belgian academic institutions. This intervention had a budget of around €1,75 million and had been on-going for about two years: the BAPED-execution period was from December 15, 2016, to March 30, 2019.

The anticipated outcome of the intervention by the BAPED- programme was to build the foundations for long-standing partnerships between South-African and Belgian research and training institutions aimed at improving business-oriented skills development, training and research. To achieve this outcome BAPED focussed on the following outputs:

- Result 1: Skills, competences and capacities are developed through (accelerated) scholarships for Bachelor, Master and PhD studies;
- Result 2: Skills, competences and capacities are strengthened through scholarships for national and international mobility and short-term trainings;
- Result 3: Academic partnerships within South Africa and between South Africa (SA) and Belgium (BE) are fostered through the organisation of knowledge sharing initiatives.

This BAPED End-Term Review, carried out in March – April 2019, aimed to draw useful lessons for the further consolidation of the South African – Belgian partnerships that were created with support of the BAPED-programme. The main **objective** of this End-Term Review was to evaluate the BAPED-programme, based on the five DAC criteria: of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

These objectives could be summarised into the following two main objectives:

- 1) To assess the performance of the intervention and especially appreciate effectiveness & durability / sustainability.
- 2) To draw useful lessons for the further consolidation of the South African-Belgian partnerships (and especially what effective tools for cooperation between SA and BE, including at federal level, for the future exist/can be developed).

The methodology was designed to respond to the updated Terms of Reference for the BAPED End-Term Review, covering the three following groups of evaluation questions:

- Generic DAC-evaluation questions on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, with a special focus on effectiveness and sustainability;
- Proposed specific evaluation questions, related to the three main Results of the intervention, and integrating the DAC-criteria;
- The transversal and horizontal themes specified by the ToR (gender, disadvantaged background – esp. females, disabled / special needs).

On the basis of the document review the evaluation questions were developed and included in an evaluation matrix (see Annex 6). Also a Theory of Change approach for analysing the intervention logic (see section 3.1.2) was carried out. For triangulation purposes all provisional outcomes were shared and discussed with the relevant BI-stakeholders and with the BAPED Project Donor and Coordinating Agencies.

The main limitation of the intervention was found to be the short time span, as not all initiatives were fully implemented yet. Allowing for ground preparation time with the various stakeholders involved, in particular at government level, could have helped in solving bottleneck issues, including legislative, that arose. Therefore, neither the effectiveness nor the sustainability could be fully assessed. The same applies to the anticipated impact. Furthermore, the cancellation of the involvement of DHET, DTS and Transnet was not evaluated. It was proposed by the evaluator to organise meetings with those organisations (see the Inception Report), but the BAPED-team concluded that this would not be useful, given the limited time made available for the evaluation.

2. Results and conclusions

The following findings of this BAPED End-Term Review respond to the evaluation questions (for those questions: see Annex 6). In general it should be considered that time dynamics (delays in implementation, short time span of the project) have had serious effects on the outputs and outcomes.

Relevance:

The BAPED-project was relevant since its interventions were directly linked to the SA National Development Plan.

Regarding the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, the BAPED-project was fully relevant at Belgium Campus (both disadvantaged women and people with special needs are included), and partially for biostatistics (SAMRC: on inclusion of disadvantaged women). The inclusion-aspect could neither be assessed in the PFM-trainings for the National Treasury, nor in the TVET maritime initiative.

It is too early to assess whether the foundation built for establishing long-standing academic partnerships between Belgian and South-African institutions will have longevity and any impact on economic growth, however both the Belgian and South African partners involved are positive about the cooperation so far and would welcome further initiatives.

The logframe is limited to output in particular, and therefore not relevant enough for assessing outcomes. Given the time dynamics (see above) the anticipated outcomes on enhanced employability cannot be assessed, with the positive exception of Belgium Campus: it is very likely that BC-trainees will find relevant employment, given BC's past experiences .

Efficiency:

On the respective Result Areas an efficient use of resources can be reported, by all BI's. But due to the short implementation period of BAPED the initiatives could not be implemented as efficiently as it should have been: more time would have allowed for a more comprehensive implementation of the biostatistics initiative (also including the Hasselt approach for inquiry based learning), and would have better clarified the options for the maritime initiative.

Academic partnerships between Belgian and SA-institutions have been established, and foreseen activities have been implemented, as envisaged.

Effectiveness:

Skills, competences and capacities are still under development for Master and PhD (biostatistics) and for Bachelor (Belgium Campus) studies. Prospects at Belgium Campus are very positive. For biostatistics it is not possible yet to predict prospects.

The maritime initiative has not yet been implemented. PFM-trainings at the Treasury are considered by the trainees as being effective, and with some contextual adaptations these trainings could become even more effective (see section 3.1.1).

At Belgium Campus the relevant curricula and teaching approaches are effectively geared towards acquiring competences for access to the world of work. Biostatistics merely focus on Direct instruction and not yet enough on the necessary subject overarching skills and attitudes (Inquiry Based: see section 2.1 of the Review). Nothing could be assessed with regards to TVET for the maritime sector, since the initiative is not implemented yet.

The same applies for national and international mobility, as well for disadvantaged background and special needs.

After the first run the PFM-trainings were better contextualized to the local circumstances and needs in South Africa, due to inputs by the trainees (according to the interviewees). They also confirmed that it is the intention that these trainings will be sustained by the SA-government, by earmarking necessary budgets.

Belgium Campus effectively enhances safe and conducive learning environments, also by providing special support to female students from a disadvantaged background (boarding facilities) and to students with special needs. Such a policy was not identified for biostatistics, the maritime sector and the PFM-trainings.

Gender-specific interests have been taken into account by biostatistics / SAMRC and Belgium Campus. More explicit attention to this aspect is recommendable for the other initiatives (National Treasury, maritime sector).

Academic partnerships are fostered through knowledge exchanges (conferences), but a more balanced type of reciprocity would be more effective on the longer run.

Due to the short time span it is not possible yet to assess whether the scholarships will be successful and will enhance employability, outside the positive exception of Belgium Campus. The effectiveness of Belgium Campus is high (as is their score on the other OECD / DAC-criteria), even given the short time span of the project, because their implementation strategies were developed and tested already, were related to the context of the learners vis à vis the demands of the labour market, and effective linkages were already established. The BAPED-project provided them with an opportunity to expand their already existing activities, and to build further on the existing foundations.

Impact:

Due to the short time span and recent start of the BAPED-project it is not possible to assess the impact.

However the approach of especially Belgium Campus is very promising and it is very likely that all graduates will acquire a job in the ICT-sector.

For biostatistics the prospects are not clear yet. Probably at about half of the students will eventually acquire their grade, as it looks now.

For the maritime sector it is impossible to predict any outcome.

Sustainability:

Since Enabel is exiting SA as part of the development cooperation exit strategy, BAPED in its current form will not continue. As for the academic partnerships, foundations are built, but it is not clear yet whether these will be durable.

Prospects about sustainable academic cooperation are positive, as long as new funding is made available by other means or donors (for instance VLIR-UOS and others). To this end, the National Treasury is negotiating with DGD some extra financing (based on interests available, as for the first contribution) to continue some of the initiatives. If new funding cannot be secured, the net benefit of BAPED will be at risk. So far the net benefit consists of academic linkages established between South African and Belgian institutions, by which fruitful knowledge exchanges with scholarships have been implemented, for instance with regards to biostatistics and PFM. Belgium Campus had already effectively developed its own approaches and could easily absorb the scholarship support. Net benefit of the maritime sector remains unclear.

Institutional memories are in place, but as Enabel is pulling out these are effective only as long as cooperation is ensured by other Belgian actors (like for instance Flemish and Walloon academic institutions or other governmental institutions and / or NGOs operating in the same areas).

In general staff in participating BI's took ownership, as shown by the energy, passion and involvement expressed (Belgium Campus, biostatistics / SAMRC, National Treasury, and all Belgian partners). But on the maritime initiative a lack of ownership is reported, possibly due to the many uncertainties with regards to this initiative.

Continuation of this kind of project is highly recommendable, if the example / good practice of the approach by Belgium Campus will be leading.

Agreements with DST, DHET and Transnet were not signed, and only 50% of planned activities were committed. As far as the implemented activities are concerned, these facts do not have a significant impact on the sustainability of the BAPED-project. Nevertheless, it would be wise to re-establish the relationship and keep them informed about the outcomes and prospects. This could be done by other Belgian institutions stepping in, for instance VLIR-IOS, and in close collaboration with the SA National Treasury.

A fair gender approach could be assessed at biostatistics / SAMRC and Belgium Campus, also with regards to data collection been broken down by gender. Among those initiatives the gender achievements are ensured.

Safe and conducive learning environments, especially for female staff and students, are ensured with regards to biostatistics and Belgium Campus.

The interests of disadvantaged students and students with special needs have been taken into account appropriately and effectively at Belgium Campus. More attention to the inclusion issue at planning stages of BAPED would have been helpful for the other BI's involved.

A fair approach towards students with special needs could be assessed at Belgium Campus, also with regards to data collection been broken down by special needs students. Among this initiative the special needs achievements are ensured.

Safe and conducive learning environments, especially for students with special needs, are ensured with regards to Belgium Campus only.

The monitoring logframe should put more focus on outcome monitoring (qualitative), with SMART indicators accordingly.

3. Recommendations

Below are the general recommendations from the review:

1. For Enabel: Should similar types of educational projects be designed in the future, a project time-span of five years, with option to extension, would create better outcomes in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and impact.
2. For Enabel: monitoring to include outcome indicators on requirements for employability.
3. For Enabel: monitoring to include indicators for appropriate teaching and learning approaches: on inquiry-based training approaches enhancing employability, next to subject oriented direct instruction. A balanced testing approach (summative and formative) to be included.
4. For BI's, SA Government and Enabel: put more emphasis on modern conducive teaching approaches (also for subject overarching skills and attitudes) and consider all levels of the South African education sector, from the primary level onwards, since lower levels of education have a significant effect on success rates in higher education, for enhancing the image and employability of youth (see section 2.1 of the End-Term Review report).
5. For Belgian universities: with Enabel pulling out, investigate other options for support to cooperation, for instance by involving VLIR-UOS (Flanders), and EU-support (incl. Erasmus+ and relevant EU-programmes already managed by the National Treasury).

4. Lessons learned

- The approach by Belgium Campus is a splendid example of a good practice for enhancing employability and inclusion (vulnerable students and students with special needs): embedding teaching and learning in the context (social, cultural, economic), also actively involving the industry, and with a strong emphasis on subject overarching skills and attitudes (inquiry based approach: see section 2.1 of the Review).
- The example of the maritime sector shows that without an involvement of the industry and without embedment in the actual context, outlooks on the effectiveness of the intervention are narrow.
- For such an educational project the time-span needs to be carefully assessed against the time required to establish relationships and linkages allowing for smooth implementation (for instance removing barriers linked to legislative issues) and to develop and roll out educational offers in line with the outcomes sought given a specific (here South African)-context .