

Saide – enabling successful open learning for all

In pursuit of a social justice agenda, Saide has adopted an Open Learning approach to enable as many people as possible to take advantage of affordable and meaningful educational opportunities throughout their lives.

Open Learning is an approach to all education that seeks to remove unnecessary barriers to learning, while aiming to provide learners with a reasonable chance of success in programmes centred on their specific needs and located in multiple arenas of learning.

Key principles inform an Open Learning approach. These can be clustered as follows:

1. Increasing access for success

- learners have meaningful and affordable access to opportunities for lifelong learning
- unnecessary barriers to access are removed
- wherever appropriate, learning provision is flexible, allowing learners to increasingly determine where, when, what and how they learn, as well as the pace at which they will learn

2. Enabling success

- providers create the conditions for learner success through learner support, contextually appropriate resources and sound pedagogical practices
- learning processes centre on the learners and contexts of learning, build on their experience and encourage active engagement leading to independent and critical thinking

3. Continuing success

- prior learning and experience is recognised wherever possible
- arrangements for credit transfer and articulation between qualifications facilitate further learning

These principles should be applied in order to develop meaningful educational opportunities, regardless of the 'mode of delivery' used. Sometimes learners do not enjoy proximity to conventional learning centres, or if they do have access to classes and courses near to the place where they live, they may be working, or have family responsibilities which render them unable to attend fixed face-to-face classes at a centralised venue. Or, they may simply prefer to study in their own environment, at their own pace. To provide access for these learners, education programmes should be designed using open learning principles.

Learner support is necessary to ensure not only that learning is **flexible**, and **accessible**, but also that learners have a **fair chance to succeed**. In other words, the principles of open learning have to be considered together, and in tension with each other. Sometimes increasing flexibility increases access, but reduces the amount of support that is possible, and decreases the chances of learner success. Equally, enabling greater access by relaxing admission requirements may require the inclusion of a greater support component which could then result in delivery that is less flexible.