

# SAQA BULLETIN

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## FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING: QUO VADIS?



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

## GENERAL

CHE	Council on Higher Education
COLTECH	Computerised information management system used by FET colleges
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FETMIS	Further Education and Training Management Information System (DoE)
GEC/GETC	General Education (Training) Certificate
GET	General Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HET	Higher Education and Training
HRD	Human Resource Development
INSET	In-service Education for Teachers
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NGO	Non-Government Organization
Ntsika	Enterprise promotion agency in the Department of Trade and Industry
NSA	National Skills Authority
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RQF	Regional Qualifications Authority
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCFET	Umfolozzi College of Further Education & Training
Umalusi	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Council (GENFETQA)
UZ	University of Zululand

## SAQA

ETQA	Educational and Training Quality Assurance body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body

# SAQA BULLETIN

## Introduction to this issue and the future role of the SAQA BULLETIN

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

#### GENERAL

Since its establishment in 1995, SAQA has been faced with various challenges and opportunities. The establishment of a national qualifications framework and the structures and substructures that are needed to support it has been an ambitious and much debated process. The *SAQA Bulletin* is an attempt by SAQA to formalise the academic debate on various SAQA-related issues in a recognised journal.

In many circles this debate has led to the development of a new vanguard-like discourse, often referred to as an NQF-discourse, in which new language is used to promote reflection and active discussion. Until recently this discourse has been informal, ad hoc and to a large extent insufficiently coherent for the wider community. It is envisaged that the *SAQA Bulletin* will increasingly offer a more formal environment wherein the NQF discourse can mature, and will include the publication of relevant research results and recommendations.

#### THIS ISSUE

This edition of the *SAQA Bulletin* focuses on Further Education and Training (FET) in support of the Minister of Education's declaration of 2003 as "The year of FET".

In August 2002 SAQA commissioned a paper from the HSRC. The paper, titled *Further Education and Training: Quo Vadis?*, was prepared by Mr Botshabelo Maja and Ms Susan Meyer. This paper and invited responses to it were presented at the annual SAQA Chairman's Lecture on 9 April 2003.

The complete paper and responses are contained in this edition of the *SAQA Bulletin*. Apart from a few minor editorial changes the responses have been reproduced in the form in which they were presented at the lecture.

#### THE STATUS OF ARTICLES IN THE SAQA BULLETIN

SAQA reasserts its statement in previous issues of the *SAQA Bulletin* that only those parts of the text clearly flagged as decisions or summaries of decisions taken by the Authority should be seen as reflecting SAQA policy.

## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

Almost two years ago, the South African Qualifications Authority engaged in a deepened reflection on how to carry the message of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the farthest corners of the land. This was to be done through a broad, multi-faceted strategy targeting various sectors of society. To this end, regional workshops were conducted around the country; a brief but vigorous media advocacy campaign was carried out; and a project to establish outreach regional offices to educate local communities about the NQF and to render appropriate services was approved.

Another important component of that strategy was to establish the SAQA Chair's lecture series, with the aim of identifying critical issues relevant to the NQF and encouraging public dialogue. The first lecture, titled *Regional Qualifications Framework: Possibilities and Limitations*, addressed issues relating to the regionalisation of the NQF. It was motivated by the 1999 SADC Protocol on Education and Training in the Southern African Development Community, which calls for harmonisation, equivalence and standardisation in the region's education and training sectors. The lecture was also inspired by the broader vision and mission of NEPAD to foster greater interaction among African states: Mr Mokoena of the NEPAD secretariat gave the keynote in that instance.

The second lecture held on 9 April 2003 at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Education campus in Groenkloof, Pretoria, was an attempt to contribute to the call by Education Minister Kader Asmal's declaration of 2003 as the year of Further Education and Training (FET). The declaration, although belated, gives recognition to the importance of the FET in the development of the national economy. It has been said, and rightly so, that the FET is the Cinderella within the family of the three education bands (the other two being general and higher education). FET is the least resourced and, consequently, the least developed of the three. Yet, this sector holds the greatest potential for unleashing the tremendous talent that can further contribute to socio-economic development and address the endemic problems of poverty, unemployment and crime. Above all, it broadens the horizons of learning, career options and personal efficacy.

It is because of the gross underinvestment in FET that this lecture has the subtitle "Quo Vadis"? It suggests a perceived policy ambiguity. On the one hand, there is the minister's bold declaration while, on the other, the critical resourcing to give substance to the declaration does not reflect the declared policy intention. This practice, observed in other instances, gives credence to what some analysts refer to as an exercise in symbolism. Currently, according to the Maja and Meyer paper, only two percent of the national education budget is allocated to the FET sector. If this amount is not increased substantially, it will tarnish the credibility of the declaration and further undermine the prospect of individual and national growth.

Arguably, one of the most daunting challenges currently faced by the South African economy is the development of appropriate and meaningful technical skills. Personal efficacy, social prosperity, national stability and global competitiveness depend on correcting the historic imbalance in human resource development in South Africa. The skills shortage crisis is not a figment of the imagination emerging only in the last decade or

so. Its roots extend deep into the colonial period, characterised by policies of benign neglect in the provision of education and training for the black majority; subsequent apartheid legislation exacerbated underdevelopment by deliberately preventing blacks from equal access to meaningful technical skills programmes. Over the years, this denial of access to equal opportunities in education and training bred preference for the academic stream and an eschewal of the technical and vocational streams. The present inverted pyramid (see page 8) in enrolment at tertiary institutions is a living testimony of the apartheid legacy; and it is now haunting us with a biting vengeance and undermining growth potential for years to come.

It is not the intention here to dwell on the past, but rather to state the objective conditions that are antecedent to the present. It should be emphasised that the central purpose of the lecture was to look forward and contribute to a constructive dialogue intended to grow the FET sector in a meaningful way. I believe that the lecture points broadly to the way forward and that the three respondents with their unique perspectives offer critical inputs and insights that have enriched the debate immensely.

The importance of strategic and sustained investment in the FET cannot be over emphasised. It is also important to view the education and training terrain holistically; that is, as a single infrastructure. A unified dwelling comprising three integrated components. These are: the GET, as the foundation of any modern society; the HET, as the overarching roof providing research capability, development and innovation; and the FET as the wall for this magnificent edifice. Weak walls endanger the well-being of the dwelling. Failure to appreciate this integrated view and to strike an appropriate strategic mix of investments runs the risk of undermining reconstruction and development.

I trust that these deliberations will be part of the growing body of considerations that will now inform the implementation of an effective FET sector, elevating it from its Cinderella status to the realisation of a genuine enjoyment of parity of status with the other fraternal bands. There is an urgent need to build communities of trust that will serve as the cornerstone of the onslaught on underdevelopment as well as enhance personal efficacy, social prosperity, national stability and improve South Africa's global competitiveness. For its part, SAQA has launched a project that seeks to enhance FET management and technological capacity development within the NQF. This should complement other current initiatives such as the National Business Initiative's Colleges' Fund, the totality of which should meet the monumental skills challenge facing South Africa. With these initiatives, combined with resolve, willpower, the requisite resources and capacity we can, at last, bid farewell to the debilitating ambiguity embedded in "Quo Vadis?".

We would like to thank Professor Jonathan Jansen's support for providing the space for the lecture, and the enthusiasm of all those who attended. Thanks are also extended to Mr Samuel Isaacs, SAQA's Executive Officer, and the staff and the members of the Authority for their support in making South Africa a better place to live in and hastening the realisation of the dream to make Africa the continent of the 21st century.

Mokubung Nkomo  
Chair  
South African Qualifications Authority  
April 2003

# FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING: QUO VADIS?

Occasional Paper commissioned by the South African Qualifications Authority, researched and developed by the Human Sciences Research Council.

## 1 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the debate and national effort to transform Further Education and Training (FET) into a vital and vibrant component of South Africa's human resource development. The aim is to outline the "big picture" concerning FET, rather than duplicate any part of the considerable body of research that has been done in relation to this band in the last few years. Working from the view that success in social development requires a holistic approach, the paper draws from local and international research to highlight the existing or necessary interplay between key elements in the developing South African FET policy framework and institutional context.

We seek to identify areas of potential synergy, as well as unresolved and neglected issues. Where relevant or pertinent, reference will be made to comparative international experience. Current developments in FET will also be considered in relation to South Africa's role in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Finally, we will comment on the role of SAQA with reference to the prior analysis and discussion.

## 2 A VISION WITHIN A VISION

The vision for FET must be considered against the background of the government's vision for the future of South African society as a whole.

### 2.1. The government's socio-political vision for the country

The government's socio-political vision for the country is the product of wide consultation and negotiation with key stakeholders that has led up to and beyond the formal transition to democracy. This vision seeks to promote the development of a unified multi-cultural society and a democratic political order with a strong emphasis on social justice. It is a vision for a just, democratic and developmental society and is articulated very clearly in the preamble to the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996: 1):

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by the law;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Although the four facets of this vision seem uncontroversial, the analysis put forward in this paper will show that promoting them all simultaneously within the FET band is not always straightforward.

## 2.2. The economic growth strategy envisaged for SA

Growth, Equity and Redistribution (GEAR), the government's macro-economic policy, proposes a strategy to develop South Africa as a society that offers opportunities for all citizens to realise their potential. GEAR puts forward a long-term vision for the country's socio-economic future (Department of Finance, 1996: 1):

As South Africa moves toward the next century, we seek:

- A competitive fast-growing economy which creates sufficient jobs for all workseekers;
  - A redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor;
  - A society in which sound health, education and other services are available to all; and
  - An environment in which homes are secure and places of work are productive.
- One of the criticisms of GEAR has been that it proposes a macro-economic policy without giving sufficient attention to the structural and institutional changes that have to take place in sectors that will be crucial for attaining its policy objectives. King & McGrath (2002) argue that the following key aspects are neglected:
- Pressures to restructure the industrial sector to counteract the stark polarisation and distortion between large, medium and small enterprises;
  - Implications of the chosen growth path for the country's employment strategy; and
  - The need for large-scale institutional development and/or transformation at all levels of the education system to overcome a deep-rooted legacy of poor quality provision and attainment.

In spite of these shortcomings, GEAR is currently the dominant macro-economic policy at the foundation of the country's economic development path. So for the foreseeable future South Africa looks set to continue along its inherited path of a highly skewed dual economy: in a few key sectors a small number of highly competitive corporations, many participating successfully in international markets, and the remainder consisting of small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs). The former sector employs a small segment of workers in the formal economy – mostly in high-technology, high-skills occupations where workers are engaged in the so-called “knowledge economy” of



international trade. The latter sector provides employment for the majority of workers in the formal and informal sectors, and also (by default) to the vast majority of new entrants to the labour market, generally in low- and intermediate-skilled jobs. Revitalisation of the FET band has to be undertaken with full appreciation of these contextual realities, so that FET can contribute to the vision of a fast growing economy that generates many new employment opportunities.

An important cautionary note should be raised here, coming from experience elsewhere Africa. In Ghana and Uganda, economic growth and the resulting wealth distribution during the 1990s benefited only households with one or more breadwinners working in market-linked jobs. The very poor people living in remote rural areas, those engaged in subsistence farming or other survivalist economic activities and households where the head was unemployed, did not benefit. In fact, they became even poorer (World Bank, 2000a). If this scenario holds true for South Africa also, economic growth may not automatically translate into employment growth and/or improved quality of life for poor people. This experience should be borne in mind in further planning of the FET sector.

### **2.3. An appropriate skills development strategy**

Specialists are divided on the extent to which South Africa should pursue a high skills strategy for economic development. On the one hand, Michael Young argues that the need for a high skills approach cannot be ignored (Kraak & Young, 2001). On the other hand, analysts such as Motala & Pampallis (2001) point out that future employment growth in South Africa will lie in low-technology industries, rather than in those that require high-level technology. King & McGrath (2002) are probably right to argue for a twin strategy. Quoting the World Bank's 1999 education sector report, they advocate simultaneous improvement (in terms of access as well as quality) on two fronts:

- Diffusing basic education and foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, reasoning, social and problem-solving skills) throughout the population; and
- Intermediate and high-skills development, even if only part of the population stands to benefit directly in the short-to-medium term.

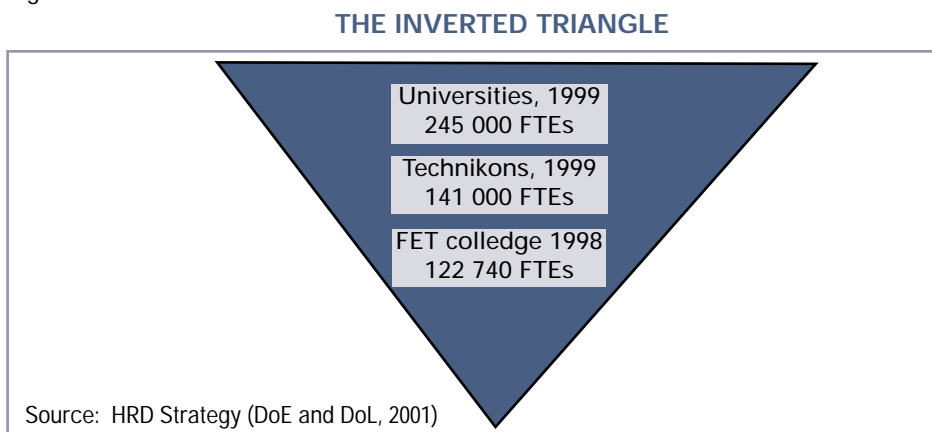
Political and equity imperatives inherent in South African education policy demand visible progress on both these fronts. The first component accords with the observation, also articulated by Young (1993; 2001), that the economic advancement of a country depends largely on the extent to which knowledge and skills are diffused throughout the population as a whole.

In the HRD Strategy (DoE & DoL, 2001) this matter will be addressed in the first two strategic objectives. Strategic objective 1: Improving the foundations for life and work focuses on improving access and quality of early childhood development, adult basic education and training, compulsory universal general education, and maths and science education. Strategic objective 2: Improving the supply of high quality skills

(particularly scarce skills) that are more responsive to societal and economic needs focuses on developing and retaining scarce skills, and improving the alignment of the FET and HET sectors with the identified skills needs of the country. A particular longer-term priority is to reverse the high ratio of higher education enrolments to FET enrolments, represented graphically in figure 1 below. This distortion in the country's education and training sector profile is not unique to South Africa. According to the World Bank (1998) such "a bloated demand for higher education" (p. 2) typically occurs in countries where the education systems are run and financed by the state and where secondary school leavers face poor employment prospects.

The anti-egalitarian thrust of the second objective, and the hard trade-offs that it implies, will demand a sensitive approach from policy makers. Perhaps the best compromise between pragmatic considerations and social justice would be to allow continued enrolment of the majority of FET-level learners in schools, because ordinary schooling is less expensive than vocational and technical education and training. Special financial incentives (e.g. bursaries) and other support measures could then be targeted specifically at attracting talented poor learners to magnet schools and FET colleges.

Figure 1



#### 2.4. The vision for the FET college sector

The outcome of the Department of Education's process for developing a curriculum framework to articulate the specific curriculum vision for the FET colleges is still pending, I, but the common thrust in the FET Colleges Landscape document (DoE, 2001) and SAQA's Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) policy document (2001) is towards a fairly broad focus for the FET curriculum. According to these documents the FET phase must prepare students not only for economic participation, but also for citizenship and possible continuation with higher education. Allowance also needs to be made for horizontal pathways between directions of study that range

from the general (academic) to the specific (occupational). In order to cater for the full range of individual interests, as well as the country's social and economic needs, the colleges and schools must offer a spectrum of study directions. The colleges will concentrate on general vocational and occupational (including technical) education and training, while the schools will offer general academic and general vocational studies.

So far the balance that is sought in the FET curriculum between diversity and depth has been articulated most fully in the National Curriculum Statement's vision for school-based learners who have completed their FET studies (DoE, 2002b: 15):

The kind of learner that is envisaged is one who will ... be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity and social justice.

In addition to the above, learners emerging from the FET band must:

- have access to, and succeed in, lifelong education and training of good quality;
- demonstrate an ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally;
- be able to transfer skills from one context to another;
- be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- organise themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; and
- communicate effectively, using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

Although the college sector curriculum can be expected to place a much stronger emphasis on technical and vocational knowledge, the emerging consensus appears to be towards including a stronger general component in vocational education and training – not only in terms of cognitive skills, but also in terms of values and attitudes. This is in line with current international trends “towards inserting the general into the vocational and ... inserting the vocational into the general” (Gamble, 2002: 11).

### **3 THE IMPACT OF FET ON HRD**

Quality of provision is the central challenge for both schools and FET colleges on the way to fulfilling the broader educational mission envisaged in the Landscape document and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002). In addition, the new FET colleges will have to move a considerable way beyond the narrow technical focus that characterised the work of the old technical colleges.

#### **3.1. The interface between FET and the labour market**

Companies in the formal sector face increased levels of competition, fuelled by the pressures of globalisation. In addition to employer requirements in terms of FET graduates' mastery of theoretical knowledge and up-to-date technical and/or occupational skills, colleges will have to attend to the following general education components:

- Students' grounding in foundational knowledge, particularly English literacy and mathematics or mathematics literacy; and
- Key social and cognitive skills necessary for effective functioning within modern work situations, including the ability to work in teams, to innovate and to take initiative when appropriate.

King & McGrath (2002) argue strongly that it is inadequate to focus the vocational component of FET solely on preparing students for employment in the formal sector, which by default appears to be the current policy stance in South Africa. They point out that the present and prospective economic realities of the country make it a priority to prepare FET and secondary-level learners for possible self-employment. This view is borne out by empirical research and informal evidence, which indicates that only about five percent of FET graduates (from colleges and schools) find employment in the formal economy (Maja et al., graduates (from colleges and schools) find employment in the formal economy (Maja et al., 2003; The Star, 10 January 2003<sup>1</sup> ). Analysis of 1997 data shows that about 60% of FET graduates continued with higher education, but there is no data available on the remaining 40%. The authors of the HRD strategy (DoE & DoL, 2001) point out that some middle-class learners take some time off after matric for leisure and travel before returning to higher education at a later stage. It is open to speculation whether many poor learners, who are likely to form the majority in this category, are ever likely to continue with higher education or formal occupational training. Dropout rates in the secondary school phase add a further dimension to this picture, as shown in Table 1. This data from 1997 suggests that about ten percent of learners drop out of the public school system between Grades 9 and 11 (HSRC, 2003). Taken together, these figures - impressionistic though some might be - indicate that a considerable proportion of students exiting from the GET and FET bands (graduates and dropouts<sup>2</sup>) are ultimately left with self-employment as their only or most likely economic prospect. This practical reality has to be taken into account in the development of FET curricula, particularly in the college sector.

Table 1

#### DROPOUT RATES, 1997

Grade	Dropout rate
1	-
2	3.9
3	3.1
4	4.7
5	4.4
6	5.2
7	-
8	7.5
9	7.3
10	9.7
11	14.1
12	-

Source:  
HSRC, 2003 (to be published)

1 Information supplied by the Education Foundation.

2 Low completion and throughput rates in higher education would further add to this problem.

From experience in South Africa and other countries on the continent, three possible pathways have been identified for students' transition from education and training to self-employment in SMMEs (Afenyadu et al., 2001):

- The "high road to small business" – from school to training (often a mixture of formal and informal, institution- and enterprise-based modalities), then on to wage employment in the formal sector before moving on to sustainable self-employment;
- The "low road to small business" – from school to public training, to informal apprenticeship, then to informal sector wage employment and finally to self-employment; and
- The "no road to small business" – from general education or training, not embedded in market realities.

The present reality in South Africa is that a considerable proportion of learners exiting from the FET band face either unemployment or the "low road" or "no road" (survivalist) self-employment options by default. This situation is compounded by the poor quality of basic general education that most learners receive in public schools, so that they end up being unemployed, unskilled and at a serious disadvantage if self-employment is their only remaining option. Since significant employment creation in the formal economy looks unlikely for the foreseeable future, it would be prudent for all learners at FET level to be prepared as well as possible for potential self-employment.

With many prospects for curriculum diversification and assuming serious attention is paid to quality improvement, FET colleges are well placed to prepare students for niche self-employment and competitive advantage in the challenging, often precarious SMME sector. In both the college and school sectors some of the orientations and skills to prepare learners for entrepreneurship can very well be accommodated across the curriculum. The compulsory status accorded to mathematics or mathematical literacy, and emphasis on key skills such as communication, problem solving and critical thinking in the Revised Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002b) should go some way in this regard. But the business side of entrepreneurship will have to be covered specifically in commercial, business and other vocational and occupational study areas.

To avoid simplistic policy and curriculum solutions, the harshness and dangers of self-employment should be faced squarely, and factors that contribute to the high mortality rate among small businesses should be considered carefully. Here South Africa can probably learn a great deal from experience in other developing countries with large SMME sectors, particularly in Africa. For example, the Undugu project (in Nairobi) described on (see page 23) has demonstrated that a holistic, phased intervention over three or four years can help poor learners to make the difficult move from poor

basic education to profitable and sustainable self-employment. The four-step model developed in Undugu illustrates the need for managed or facilitated linkages between key roleplayers and transitions from basic education to vocational education, then to workplace training and finally on to profitable and sustainable self-employment. This experience also highlights the need for Ntsika - and possibly also private SMME support agencies - to be drawn much more centrally into FET policy development and implementation strategies.

### **3.2. Preparation for citizenship**

Preparing students for meaningful social participation and informed citizenship will require specific actions in terms of both the formal and informal curriculum:

- Beyond an expanded focus in terms of old and new vocational knowledge and skills, the formal curriculum must include a definite general education component that will provide students with a knowledge and skills base that will enable them to function as informed consumers, and responsible parents, community members and citizens; and
- The values and attitudes associated with democratic and social interaction in multicultural settings may be learnt best through students' direct exposure to and participation in actual social structures and processes. The informal curriculum may provide more such opportunities than the formal curriculum, so it will be important for schools and colleges to ensure that structures such as LRCs and sports clubs, and even leisure activities demonstrate key democratic principles and processes, as well as the other social values and norms espoused in DoE policy documents such as the Manifesto on Values in Education (2002).

### **3.3. Facilitating continuation to higher education**

One of the reasons for the failure of technical colleges to attract a larger proportion of FET band learners may be that these institutions' narrow technical/vocational focus has been perceived as an educational dead-end. By enrolling in a technical college learners would effectively close all further education pathways except in the specific field of study that they had chosen. But very few young people reach sufficient levels of maturity in adolescence to make final choices of careers or vocational directions. For this reason many students may want to avoid premature specialisation and keep their options open, including possible continuation with general academic education at the Higher Education (HE) level. If growth in FET college enrolments is expected to be demand-driven (at least to some extent), the new FET curricula may have to offer more options in terms of a balance between general academic components and qualifications and those that are more vocational or technical. If pathways to HE are kept open, students do not have to abandon the ideal of university study when they enrol at FET colleges.

## **4 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FET PHASE**

The main challenges for FET may be placed under four headings: addressing both the supply and demand sides of FET; ensuring macro-level policy coherence; streamlining institutional arrangements; and optimising curriculum relevance and delivery.

### **4.1. Addressing both the supply and demand sides**

As in many other parts of the world, tensions exist in South Africa between the supply and demand sides in FET policy development (World Bank, 1998). Achievement of the policy objectives that have been set require balancing the attention that has been paid so far to the supply side with more attention to the demand side. Changing the profile of FET curricula and institutions will be essential but not sufficient on its own for achieving the desired scale and depth of change envisaged.

Here South Africa can probably learn a great deal from international experience. Many reforms aimed at directing more learners into vocational and occupational streams have failed because of resistance from communities and/or poor demand. This has been the experience in both industrialised countries, such as France and Australia, and in developing African countries. The rejection of rural curricula introduced by Tanzania and Kenya during the 1960s and 1970s are a case in point (Blakemore & Cooksey, 1981). Some of the main reasons for failure of such policies have been the perceptions of parents and learners that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an inferior form of education (to academic studies) and/or that learners would be trapped in a narrow field of specialisation from which there is no escape or return to other directions of study. So, if experience in other countries - especially in Africa - is indicative, we can anticipate continued demand for academic qualifications and resistance to TVET. This pattern appears to be rooted deeply in cultural attitudes that have been embedded historically in the education systems in Britain and France, and inherited by countries that were formerly under their colonial rule (Blakemore & Cooksey, 1981). So, for example, the Zimbabwean experience has shown that even prolonged serious economic hardship in a society does not improve the demand for TVET. Since the same mindset clearly also prevails among the general public in South Africa, policy makers should anticipate resistance on the demand side and consider testing incentives and other policy instruments to stimulate demand, drawing on both the successes and failures of other countries that have faced the same problems.

### **4.2. Macro-level coherence in policy and governance**

Transformation and revitalisation of the FET band presents a particularly complex set of challenges in terms of both policy formulation and implementation. The vision that government has put forward for the FET band locates it at the nexus of three key development sectors, namely: education, labour, and industrial and trade development. In order to ensure optimal articulation and integration (where required) between the policies emanating from the three state departments concerned - DoE, DoL and DTI - clear communication and collaboration between the following departments and

structures will be required: Departments of Education and Labour, the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET), the National Skills Authority (NSA) and Ntsika, the small enterprise development arm of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Although significant changes and shifts have already been achieved in terms of parity and alignment of education and training since the democratic transition in 1994, the integration that was foreseen in early policy documents has not occurred. The two systems are moving rather towards alignment and articulation, particularly through the NQF, and also through implementation of the HRD strategy. As education policy implementation research has shown, this ambitious project will require consistent efforts over time to shift mindsets and build new institutional cultures (Fuhrman et al., 1988; Fullan, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987).

In some cases procedures and formats have to be simplified to ensure that new policies are implemented. For example, one possible reason for the slow uptake on the part of companies to offer learnerships is that the procedure and format for submitting sponsorship applications to SETAs are so complicated that potential business participants are alienated. This reflects the experience in other countries such as Korea where training levy schemes have failed to take off (World Bank, 1998). Slow and uneven implementation of student bursary schemes in some provinces has been another instance where bureaucratic inertia and complexities have subverted the effectiveness and efficiency of the new policy framework.

The complex picture of national policy coherence comes sharply into focus in the arena of quality assurance. Six structures share responsibility for quality assurance in the FET band:

- The DoE's Chief Directorate for Quality Assurance with operational responsibility for quality assurance of institutional performance and curriculum matters in the school sector;
- The NBFET, required to advise the Minister on quality promotion and quality assurance for FET;
- SETAs, responsible for assuring the quality of FET provision within their respective sectors;
- Umalusi (GENFETQA), responsible for quality assurance of the FETC standardised assessment, i.e. developing and implementing the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) in the school and college sectors;
- The CHE's HEQC (Council on Higher Education's Higher Education Quality Committee), responsible for higher education (HE) qualifications offered in FET institutions; and
- SAQA - responsible for establishing equivalence of unit standards and qualifications in the FETC and workplace training, as part of the progressive development of the NQF.



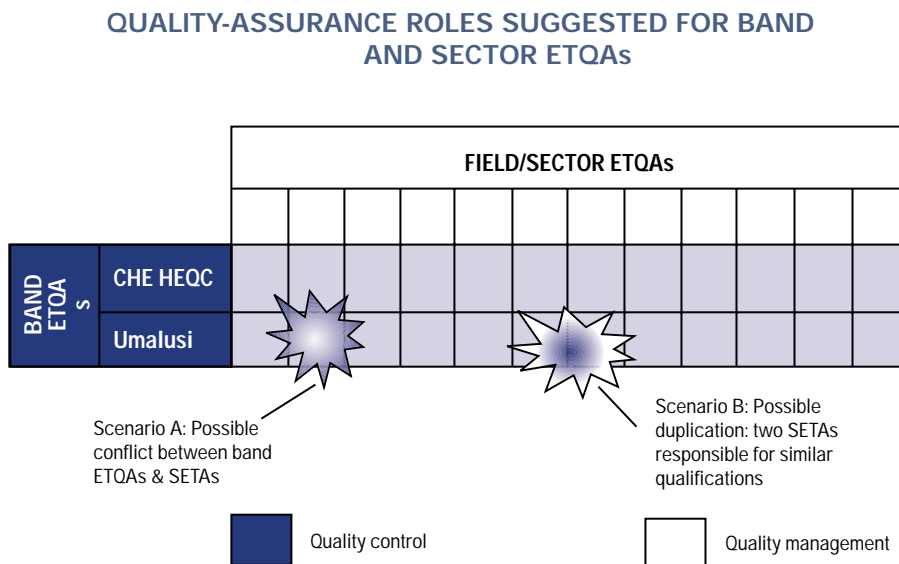
This means that expertise and institutional capacity are dispersed across a range of initiatives and structures. Articulation between these bodies appears weak and there is a need for structured dialogue among them if the jurisdiction, policy, authority and operational functions of each are to be clarified.. The roles and functions of SAQA, Umalusi and the HEQC in relation to each other need clarification as a priority, particularly in view of the planned introduction of the FETC from 2006 and its crucial importance for articulation in the FET band.

The division of responsibilities between Umalusi and the CHE HEQC in the FET arena seems fairly straightforward:

- Umalusi is responsible for the FETC for schools as well as FET institutions; and
- The HEQC is responsible for all HE band qualifications offered in FET institutions.

In several other important areas, however, quality-assurance roles and responsibilities remain unclear and/or unresolved. For instance, on the issue of whether or not SETAs are given standard-setting powers, some coherence questions remain. A key issue is that policy is not absolutely clear concerning the locus of authority and delineation of responsibilities between the band and field/sector ETQAs, a situation that could lead to miscommunication and even conflict where the interests of different ETQAs intersect, as depicted in the matrix below (Figure 2).

Figure 2



A possible approach to resolving any actual or perceived duplications or contradictions might be to view quality-assurance functions as falling into two distinct yet complementary divisions (Harvey & Green, 1993; Winch, 1996):

- Quality control – monitoring and/or evaluation to ensure policy compliance in terms of (nationally) stipulated minimum standards, targets, quotas etc.; and
- Quality management – on-site, discretionary monitoring and/or evaluation aimed at achieving optimal standards (which may/should exceed the required minimum standards) depending on the capacity and vision of the institution.

In terms of this distinction, line accountability to SAQA and the Minister of Education would be vested in the band ETQAs and their views or positions would automatically take precedence over those of the field ETQAs in scenario A, shown in Figure 1. Another mechanism that could be adopted (either supplementary to or instead of the previously mentioned) is for SAQA to fulfil an arbitration function in respect of disagreements that cannot be resolved in bilateral interaction between band and field/sector ETQAs. In scenario B the coordination function assigned to the relevant band ETQA (HEQC or Umalusi) would be required to prevent or resolve duplication in qualification design undertaken by field/sector ETQAs.

Two other important matters that remain unclear or unresolved in terms of coordinating quality assurance in FET are:

- The quality-assurance role of provincial departments' examination sections, which constitutes a conflict of interest in relation to provincial departments' status as education providers; and
- How the functions of the DoE's Chief Directorate: Quality Assurance, i.e. Whole School Evaluation (WSE) and Systemic Assessment, should articulate or align with the quality-assurance functions of SAQA and Umalusi.

To support planning and quality assurance in the FET band effective and efficient articulation between all the relevant databases will be critical. These are the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), managed by SAQA; the DoE's Education Management Development System (EMIS); PERSAL, the DoE's database of educators; the DoE's Matriculation Examination database; and the general population data base, managed by the Department of Home Affairs – to facilitate verification of people's qualifications<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Note: SAQA also has an internal unit called the Centre for the Evaluation of Educational Qualifications (CEEQ), which evaluates foreign qualifications.

### 4.3. Streamlining institutional arrangements

Two main sets of institutions fall in the FET band and must be considered in the development of policy frameworks and implementation strategies: FET colleges and secondary schools. There are important differences between colleges and schools in respect of institutional culture and ethos, in governance, finance and management, staffing, programmes and curricula. While these differences must be acknowledged, policy coherence requires that colleges and schools be considered as separate sectors and in relation to each other. But alignment and articulation between the school and college sectors remain crucial areas for further development within the overall FET policy framework. A two-pronged strategy seems to be required. In the short term the position of high schools in relation to FET policy needs to be spelled out to clear up confusion in the sector. Furthermore, a strategy should be devised to attract a greater proportion of learners into vocational and occupational studies over the longer term.

#### **A new institutional landscape for FET colleges**

Second only to adult basic education, the FET colleges sector has historically been the most marginalised of South Africa's education and training system. The setting up of the new FET college system, like any other system in its infancy, poses a number of challenges for both the Department of Education and the colleges themselves. The policy goals that are set out in the FET Act (Department of Education, 1998) and the nine attributes outlined for the FET colleges in the Landscape document (Department of Education, 2001) create additional challenges that colleges have not been accustomed to dealing with in the past. As technical colleges, these institutions provided training in engineering and business studies mainly, offered very limited student support and job placement, and largely remained parochial and unconnected with the outside world of work. In contrast to this, the FET college system being created envisages colleges that will offer a diversity of programmes relating to business, industry, and community needs; colleges that counsel and generally provide students with all forms of support including job placement; and colleges that will interact with all relevant sectors of our society in pursuit of greater responsiveness and vibrancy than was the case previously. Key challenges that warrant specific mention are set out below.

- The process of finalising the appointments of FET management and governance structures to guide the new institutions is currently under way. The new governance and management structures being put in place are faced with a sector that is characterised by change and challenges.
- The new FET colleges face challenges inherited from the previous dispensation. Their staff/student profiles are skewed, their quality-assurance systems are inadequate, their management information systems are not up to standard and, in some instances, their infrastructure is poor.
- The Skills Levy and the National Skills Fund open opportunities for colleges to access further funding. Thus far, colleges seem to be uninformed about how to

access these funds. In fact, planning is somewhat superficial and spurious in some colleges, and a longer-term and information-based approach to planning has to be cultivated in many institutions. Also, planning and budgeting processes necessitate intensive work and balancing different/competing interests which may place considerable strain on those colleges that are in the process of integrating the diverse institutional cultures of different campuses. So for the foreseeable future, planning will be much more than a mere technical exercise for the colleges and a culture of planning has to be entrenched more deeply not only in practice, but also in terms of people's beliefs and attitudes.

- The current qualifications profile and post-level structure of the colleges raise concern. The lack of investment in the sector in the past has had a negative impact on, among other things, the calibre of practitioners in the sector. More than 50% of professional staff at FET colleges are under-qualified or unqualified and a worrying number of them do not have any teaching qualifications or prior teaching experience. (Badroodien et al., 2002; Erasmus, 2002). These practitioners have to overcome the challenges posed by teaching-learning processes in the colleges so that they can impact positively on learning outcomes. For this reason, staff development will have to be prioritised if the colleges sector is to live up to the challenges set in terms of the policy on FET.
- Learners in colleges often come from impoverished backgrounds, have a poor educational foundation, and envisage only limited career possibilities for themselves. Colleges have a vital role to play in providing financial and psychological advice and support to such students, in offering diagnostic and compensatory educational programmes, an enriched learning environment, and career counselling and job placement services. Few colleges do so. Institutional cultures and attitudes, financial constraints and the lack of availability of adequately trained staff are all obstacles to the provision of essential support services to learners.

### **The place and focus of high schools in the FET band**

The place and focus of high schools in the FET band remains an unresolved policy issue. In the last three years the emphasis in FET policy development has been on technical colleges. The appointment in 2002 of the Ministerial Task Team on the integration of secondary schools into FET will now bring the school sector into focus. Given that the majority of FET learners study in schools, an appropriate policy framework and development strategy for this sector will be crucial if the FET band is to contribute optimally, i.e. on full scale, to HRD in the country.

Even before curriculum relevance is considered, a key challenge for schools is to reach and maintain acceptable levels of institutional functionality (effectiveness and efficiency). Hopkins' typology of schools can provide a useful framework for thinking through appropriate intervention strategies. On the basis of their practical school development

work in UK schools, Hopkins and his colleagues propose three different school improvement strategies, depending on the degree of functionality of schools (Hopkin et al., 1996). The categories of schools and appropriate support interventions that they recommend for each category can be summarised as follows:

- Type I - low performing schools: assist the school to become moderately effective, by concentrating initially on stabilising and strengthening management structures and systems;
- Type II - moderately functional schools: assist schools to become more effective, by encouraging management and staff to focus their improvement strategies centrally on the curriculum, preferably through adopting an assessment-led approach; and
- Type III - well functioning ("highly effective") schools: assist schools to maintain their standards of performance, also using an assessment-led approach.

Empirical research and practical experience gained over the last few years in quality improvement programmes indicates that a worrying proportion of South African secondary schools can be classified as Type I, i.e. low performing or even dysfunctional institutions. Although no representative database or statistical index exists for the formal classification of schools in terms of their basic functionality, research and evaluation findings such as those set out below give an indication of the poor levels of functionality in the system:

- In a research project that was undertaken for the President's Education Initiative, Eric Schollar (1998) reported on a learning time lost or wasted during the 1997 school year calculated in a time management course for principals in a Gauteng school district. The conclusion was that 170 tuition days out of a total of 191 available days were lost, through factors such as late registration, a slow start to school terms, examinations, teacher strikes, memorial services, sports gatherings and choir competitions. This concurs with informal observations in school development programmes such as Equip<sup>4</sup> and the QLP<sup>5</sup>, although the situation appears to be improving slowly, as a result of implementation of the DoE's Whole School Evaluation policy and increased monitoring by provincial departments.
  - In a series of classroom case studies in Khayelitsha schools, Jacklin (2000) and her colleagues concluded that teachers might as well not have been present in their classes for 60% of the time. Once again, similar findings have been recorded in programme evaluations such as Schollar's 2002 final impact report on the Equip pilot project.
- 4 Education Quality Improvement Partnerships of the National Business Initiative that supports 350 schools in 4 provinces
- 5 The Business Trust's Quality Learning Programme, managed by JET, that supports nearly 600 secondary schools in 17 districts across all nine provinces.

- In light of the above-mentioned findings it is not surprising that the QLP evaluators observe that the baseline evaluation results “present an extremely bleak picture of the performance of learners in the sampled QLP schools” (Paterson, 2001: 163). The learners who were assessed using standardised tests were approximately 20% in mathematics and 30% in English.
- Viewed in terms of the framework proposed by Hopkins et al., the weight of evidence indicates that many South African schools are far from ready to undertake the curriculum development work and employ the sophisticated teaching strategies required by Curriculum 2005. Even if the Ministerial Task Team recommends further development of the policy framework to allow for the declaration of schools as FET institutions, it would not be practical to target low or even moderately performing schools. The demands that programme-based funding would place on schools are likely to overburden management and governance structures in these categories of schools. As it is, only a small proportion of schools have so far been able to achieve Section 21 status (financial autonomy) in terms of the provisions of the South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996).

While attending to the capacity building and quality-assurance challenges inherent in this situation, there are possible macro- and meso-level options that may be considered for restructuring the secondary school sector to make FET provision more cost-effective and relevant. These include:

- Rationalising high schools, particularly in urban districts, into FET institutions/schools and middle schools; and
- Expanding the dedicated/specialised maths and science schools strategy to other study fields and creating “magnet schools” in provinces or districts with different vocational/technical foci to concentrate the available resources, including qualified educators in scarce subjects.

### **The relationship between colleges and schools**

On the side of the colleges there are interesting examples in the local experience of successful linkages between colleges and schools. Two mechanisms may be highlighted in particular for wider application:

- College-school alignment in the district in terms of curriculum offerings, to ensure optimal use of scarce resources and promote curriculum diversification in the area; and
- Collaboration between colleges and schools, e.g. schools operating as satellite delivery sites in rural areas.

### **Drawing more learners from general education into vocational studies**

From his analysis of empirical research findings in the former technical colleges, Cosser (2003) concluded that technical college education is a “great leveller as far as

income distribution across population groups and gender is concerned". If this conclusion and the above analysis of the relationship between FET and the labour market are correct (see sections 2.2 and 3.1), a strategy is necessary to draw increasing numbers of students from the general academic stream into the technical, vocational and occupational streams. This is a longer-term challenge that will require a concerted, multi-faceted strategy, including real improvements in the relevance and quality of curriculum delivery, a targeted, multi-level advocacy campaign, as well as application of incentives to make vocational and occupational study more attractive to learners. In particular, learnerships in high-demand and/or niche occupations could prove a drawing card.

#### 4.4. Ensuring optimal curriculum relevance and delivery

Much has been written internationally about the failure of various top-down approaches to education reform in industrialised and developing countries (e.g. Blakemore & Cooksey, 1981; Fuhrman et al., 1988; Grisay & Mählick, 1991). Having learnt from these costly experiences, there has been a marked trend towards assessment-led and curriculum-based strategies in the last two decades (e.g. Hopkins et al., 1996; Muller & Roberts, 2000). Local experience in school development programmes points in the same direction (e.g. Paterson, 2001; Schollar, 2002). In terms of such an approach the curriculum must be regarded as the focal point for all actions, mechanisms and structures planned for the various operational levels in the system. Key challenges and priorities for curriculum reform in the FET band are summarised in Table 2. To address the curriculum adequately, the three commonly identified domains must be considered: the intended, delivered and attained curriculum.

Table 2

#### FET CURRICULUM CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

Intended curriculum (curriculum development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From national examinations to an NQF compliant qualification (FETC)</li> <li>• New programmes and study fields for colleges</li> <li>• Colleges to design/introduce learnerships</li> <li>• Bridging courses – literacy, maths and science</li> <li>• Include more (relevant) general education components</li> </ul>
Delivered curriculum (teaching & learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidate use of OBE and continuous assessment</li> <li>• Mixed-mode tuition in colleges (learnerships and satellite delivery sites)</li> <li>• Accommodate adult learning styles (colleges)</li> </ul>
Attained curriculum (student outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase pass rates</li> <li>• Improve throughput rates (quality and efficiency)</li> </ul>

## The intended curriculum

Key challenges in FET curriculum development relate to improving the relevance of curricula and removing barriers to effective learning. College staff will be required to take direct responsibility for curriculum development and attend to the following priorities:

- The shift from national examinations to NQF-compliant qualifications;
- The introduction of new programmes and study fields to make colleges more responsive to the needs of the economy and local community;
- The design and introduction of learnerships to provide students in all fields with an optimal mix of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and exposure to workplace applications;
- The inclusion of bridging courses and qualifications in the curriculum that will enable students – including many who have failed matric - to overcome barriers to further learning resulting from inadequate basic school education in key areas such as English literacy, maths & science; and
- The inclusion of relevant general education components in curricula to provide students with a good grounding in the key skills required by employers, to prepare students for citizenship, and to keep pathways to higher education open.

Learnerships constitute a key curriculum innovation that holds much promise in terms of making the FET curriculum more relevant for individual learners and for the country's socio-economic development. This is an area where South Africa can learn a great deal from the international experience in industrialised countries, and in Africa. The literature on apprentice-type training in industrialised countries seems to raise more questions than answers for South Africa. Studies of Britain's Modern Apprenticeship system show that 40% of the students that enrol for apprenticeships succeed in achieving the minimum qualification – a full NVO at level 3, which is regarded as the benchmark for intermediate skills (Gamble, 2002). Higher proportions of students in the engineering fields complete their studies and qualify but, in the service sectors, only one out of ten students attains the minimum qualification. This raises questions about the suitability of apprenticeships as a curriculum model in all economic sectors. Apprenticeships appear to work well in occupations where the required knowledge and skills are specific and clearly defined, but are not effective for the development of generic vocational competencies that are not grounded in a particular job or context. The Business Administration apprenticeship is cited as an example of a study field that is characterised by such "occupational rootlessness". Such concerns have been raised across other industrialised countries as well. In a review of post-school education the OECD asks whether "dual" or extended TVET systems (such as South Africa's new learnerships) are not in fact obstacles to FET, rather than a stimulus (OECD, 1995, cited by Gamble, 2002).



The success of the German “dual system” has often been held up as a model for developing countries, but a World Bank cross-country study that included 17 countries on four continents found that the system is not readily “importable” (World Bank, 1998). The labour market structures of low- and middle-income countries differ completely from those of Germany, and the strong tradition of enterprise-sponsored training is specific to German culture. Nevertheless, the researchers conclude that the principles that underpin the German system do provide valuable lessons for other countries:

- Company participation is voluntary;
- Organisation and control of TVET are left to the body that pays for it – the state and local government pay for and control relatively general competencies taught mostly in schools and employers pay for and determine job-specific training in the work-place; and
- The dual system is not used to keep high school students from pursuing higher education.

Some of the most valuable lessons for South Africa's learnership system may come from Africa itself. For instance, the World Bank (2000b) records case studies from Africa and the West Indies, where indigenous solutions were formulated for the challenges presented by TVET. Examples are a courier service in Khartoum (Sudan) that trains and employs street children; artisans' associations in Senegal that train street children and support them to set up their own sustainable SMMEs; and an artisan apprenticeship scheme in Nairobi (Kenya) that trains and supports street children to find employment or attain profitable self-employment. The four-step model employed with success in the last project (of the Undugu Society) illustrates the value of a holistic response to the complex set of challenges associated with FET in a developing country where many learners are recent migrants from rural areas, and the social support networks in the cities are weak or non-existent:

- 1 Enrolment of the children in “informal schools” located in “slum communities”, where they learn basic literacy and survival/life skills and are supported to develop a stronger sense of self-worth;
- 2 Initiation into formal education or appropriate vocational skills training;
- 3 Placement in one-year apprenticeships with select “host artisans” along with formal workshop training once a week; and
- 4 Finally, placement of Undugu graduates in wage employment or – more likely – in profitable self-employment.

At least three lessons stand out from this and other case studies:

- “Vulnerable” categories of learners, especially those from very poor backgrounds or thrown out of traditional frameworks and/or stable family life, need to be exposed to alternative pathways to socialisation that enhance their overall identity formation and prepare them for life in an urban setting;
- Facilitation of training and work opportunities and sustained support over a period of 2-3 years, typically provided by an external agency such as a church or NGO, can be invaluable for FET to be meaningful for such “vulnerable” learners; and
- Where formal job opportunities are scarce, TVET/FET needs to dovetail with business support initiatives to ensure successful self-employment in SMMEs.

Early indications are that important lessons about learnerships can also be learnt from local initiatives (e.g. Favish, 2002; Maistry, 2002) and case studies of good practice in FET colleges. To strengthen the demand side of FET provision that is envisaged in FET policy for the colleges and the sector as a whole, the planning that colleges undertake should be as information-based and future-oriented as possible. In addition to considering a provincial economic profile and a local environment scan, colleges should also target skill development priorities identified in SETAs’ Sector Skills Plans (SSPs), especially to inform their decisions about which learnerships to offer. As Gewer (2001) suggests, there may also be merit in deliberate experimentation with different variations of the learnership concept and testing the relative demand for Skills Programmes, which may prove more applicable to the needs of employers than do learnerships.

### **The delivered curriculum**

College- and school-based educators need to consolidate the application of outcomes-based education (OBE) in their teaching of existing and new fields of study. Experience in the school sector has shown that superficial compliance with OBE is relatively easy to secure, but fundamental shifts in educators’ thinking and attitudes towards experiential learning requires much more in-depth and longer-term INSET and sustained support.

In FET colleges the curriculum delivery challenges extend further. Mixed-mode curriculum delivery (e.g. in learnerships and at satellite delivery sites) present an additional layer of complexity for colleges, which will require educators’ teaching practice to become much more diverse, flexible and responsive to students’ needs. Also, since the colleges attract students from across the cultural spectrum, including adolescents and adults across a range of ages, educators are required to accommodate diverse learning styles and cater specifically for adult learners. The implications that these envisaged developments will have in terms of teaching and training practice are

extensive. In order to give effect to these goals, college educators will not only be expected to have the expertise to develop programmes, but will also have to increasingly

develop programmes to enhance distance learning as this poses different sets of challenges in terms of programme design. It will be important not to romanticise open and distance learning as an easy solution to extending FET delivery. These delivery modes place particular demands on educators, not only regarding programme design, but also in their use of technology and remote information systems. FET curriculum developers will have to address all of these complexities boldly and creatively, to overcome the historical notoriety of distance learning in South Africa for its low impact in terms of learner achievement, completion and throughput rates.

### **The attained curriculum**

Recent studies have found that students and employers are largely satisfied with the education provided by the colleges. But, as a recent tracer study has shown, only a third of college graduates obtain formal sector employment (Maja et al., 2003). Although the quality of college education, as well as negative public perceptions about that quality, may be contributing factors it is more likely that there is a fairly low ceiling to the rate at which South Africa's formal economy generates new jobs.

As Figure 1 in Annexure A shows, two of the most immediate and pressing challenges in terms of curriculum attainment in the FET college sector are the low pass and throughput rates. Although the overall mean national pass rate of former technical colleges was 60% in 1998, it was only 47.8% for instructional offerings at FET level. The corresponding throughput rates were 54% (overall) and 50.2% (FET level). Figure 2 in the same annexure shows further that nearly one fifth of campuses are achieving throughput rates of 40% and lower. Together these two indicators raise serious questions about the quality of education offered at many FET colleges.

Throughput rates have always been a concern in the school sector, but the problem has acquired new gravity and urgency with the decline over the last three years in numbers of learners writing the matric examination. Evidently this decline is due to the exclusion practices adopted by many schools to improve their matric pass rates (Fleisch, 2001). Other major concerns are being raised about the actual quality of school leavers' curriculum attainment – in particular, the strong bias towards “easy subjects” and away from scarce “hard” subjects such as maths and science in the subject choices of secondary school learners.

## 5 MAKING FET WORK

### 5.1. A holistic approach to policy development and implementation

#### Policy instruments for direct and indirect impact

Given the range and complexity of challenges in the FET arena it will be prudent to consider all available policy instruments for application to different aspects of these challenges. McDonnell & Elmore's analysis (1987), drawn from policy implementation experience in the USA, provides a useful outline. These writers distinguish between four types of education policy instruments that may be used separately or in combination:

- Regulations – the most direct mechanism, but possibly the least effective because it frequently meets with overt or covert resistance;
- Incentives and sanctions – particularly incentives can be the most effective mechanism to encourage policy implementation, but should be applied with care to avoid unforeseen consequences;
- Capacity building programmes – also an indirect instrument; and
- Devolution of power or authority – the boldest of the indirect instruments, but sufficient capacity must be ensured at the targeted level/institutions.

Most of these instruments feature in the FET policy framework, some more strongly than others. The SA Schools Act (DoE, 1996) and the Landscape document (DoE, 2001) make provision for considerable devolution of authority to schools and FET colleges respectively. The Schools Act – with subsequent amendments - and the FET Act (DoE, 1998) provide detailed regulatory frameworks for the two sectors. There has been progress over the last few years in capacity-building programmes for schools, although on a limited scale.

Facets that warrant further consideration are:

- Capacity-building programmes for FET colleges;
- Incentives to promote or accelerate select features of the policy framework such as offering of learnerships in scarce occupations; and
- Disincentives to counteract undesirable trends such as excluding high school learners or discouraging them from writing exit-point examinations (at present the matriculation examinations) in order to improve schools' pass rates.

College-SETA partnerships may be highlighted as an part of the new landscape where colleges may need particular support. Although policy allows for provider-SETA partnerships to be initiated from either side, it appears that SETAs have so far led these processes, especially in terms of developing learnerships (Bowen, 2002; Favish, 2002). In the case of employed learners the company or SETA is likely to approach a college to offer the theoretical component of a planned learnership. But in the case of unemployed learners colleges will have to take the initiative as part of a proactive approach to recruiting students, and will have to approach SETAs. This is an entirely new area for exploring potential partnerships, and many colleges may not be able to undertake such initiatives with confidence. It has therefore been suggested that colleges collaborate and form meso-level structures to engage with SETAs (Bird, 2002). Although this is still new terrain, practical experience in some colleges suggests another approach that may be effective: a college and local business partner (municipality or company) might approach the relevant SETA together to propose a learnership programme. Indications are that articulation between FET colleges and SETAs will not be simple and straightforward. As mentioned earlier, a complex regulatory framework may discourage the private sector from participating in partnerships with colleges, as appears to have been the case in Korea. For different reasons, companies may be interested only in doing their own training in the form of short, occupation-focused skills development programmes as opposed to learnerships aimed at learners' attainment of a full qualification.

Another complicating factor may be that companies' willingness to form partnerships with colleges could vary, according to the size of the company, the overall education level of its work force and its level of technological sophistication, as has been the experience in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Mexico (World Bank, 1998). It is a sobering thought that even in the comparatively robust and well-funded Australian system, colleges have generally not been able to initiate partnerships with companies and they typically wait for the companies to "buy into" the concept of partnerships and take the initiative. Given the importance of this interface between two key institutions in FET, government and/or private-sector initiatives to assist the development of FET colleges should also target college-SETA partnerships as a priority area for support and/or facilitation.

## 5.2. Increasing FET provision for rural students

For reasons of equity and efficiency, provision of relevant FET in rural areas warrants priority attention. In the longer term the aim should be to bring rural communities' access to vocational, technical and occupational FET on a par with provision in urban areas. Several new study fields at FET colleges, such as Agriculture Studies, hold much potential for rural economic upliftment. The majority of FET colleges are located in urban and peri-urban areas, which is one of the reasons the majority of rural students' options in the FET band remain restricted to the general academic curriculum offered

in public high schools. Partnerships, as foreseen in the FET Colleges Landscape document (DoE, 2001), may go some way to reduce the urban-rural gap in FET provision but, given the historical and inherited urban bias of the college sector's geographic spread, specific initiatives that target rural schools directly will also be needed, since they constitute the only infrastructure in many areas that can offer a platform for FET-driven socio-economic development. On the one hand, a relatively higher proportion of rural schools may be permitted and encouraged to register as FET institutions and, on the other hand, ordinary high schools should be supported to offer curricula with a stronger vocational component, relevant to the needs of communities and local economies. Since rural schools are faced with a range of challenges already – particularly the challenge of attracting and retaining qualified educators – they will need focused guidance and support in undertaking new initiatives in terms of more diverse curricula.

### 5.3. Staff development

Recent surveys of capacity in the education and training sector have identified several areas requiring professional development of FET-level educators and managers (Badroodien et al., 2002; Erasmus, 2002; Read, 2002).

#### Professional development of educators

Figure 3 in Annexure A shows that a significant number of educators in FET colleges are under qualified or unqualified, and Figure 4 shows that the situation is particularly worrying in colleges that provide training at FET level only. One particular problem, supported by much informal evidence, is that many educators lack relevant and up-to-date practical workplace experience and knowledge of local labour market conditions. In addition, qualifications are no guarantee that educators' teaching practice is adequate in relation to the curriculum challenges associated with system transformation. As research in schools and colleges has shown, it will be necessary in both the school and college sectors to deepen educators' own subject knowledge in conceptually and technically demanding subjects (Badroodien et al., 2002; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999; Schollar, 2002; Webb et al., 1999). Otherwise OBE can easily degenerate into insubstantial quasi-educational activities when reliance on the old national curricula, a single textbook (in schools) and teaching manuals (in colleges) is phased out.

The limitations of non-formal staff training (short courses and workshops) as a stand-alone strategy have become very apparent in the rollout of Curriculum 2005 in the public school system. Drawing on that experience, a holistic approach to staff development is proposed for teaching staff at schools and FET colleges:

- Short courses for purposes of sensitisation and/or information dissemination; and

- Accredited formal further studies for identified staff in high-priority study fields (e.g. mathematics, communication studies and entrepreneurship) and for target groups (black staff, women and disabled persons) in order to deepen their subject knowledge.

In addition to the above, many college educators will need training or retraining in the following aspects:

- Practical training provided on-site or in simulated settings for consolidation of newly acquired skills;
- Exposure to workplace practices and technologies, particularly in high-technology sectors;
- Programme design flowing from the information gathered through environmental scans; and
- Specific training in the processes involved in registering qualifications with SAQA. Management and leadership development

The devolution of greater authority to the FET colleges has considerable ramifications for how they are led and managed. More specifically, policies and systems regarding finance, administration, human resources and infrastructure will have to be put in place and managed. Currently, the majority of colleges do not have such policies and systems, nor are managers adequately skilled to manage them. In the disadvantaged colleges, provincial departments of education have historically carried out these responsibilities. The implications on education and training of these challenges are considerable.

At the centre of these challenges is the development of proper management information systems. In general, the college sector does not have such systems and, in cases where they are present, they are not utilised fully. The management and leadership of colleges are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing management information systems. The link between education, the working world and communities, as discussed earlier, is heavily reliant on properly managed information systems in the sector. These information systems will not only have to be developed, but proper training in their use and usefulness will have to take place if they are to have the desired effect. Research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (forthcoming 2003) and the National Business Initiative (1995) indicates that currently, even at those colleges that have the COLTECH management information system in place, it is largely not in use because of the lack of adequately trained staff to manage it.

Since FET straddles a number of sectors, including education, training, SMME development, agriculture and social services, FET managers – especially college principals - have to have a multi-disciplinary background to be able to fulfil their leadership function effectively as their institutions venture into new kinds of partnerships and introduce new study areas. So, in addition to the above-mentioned leadership and

management skills, professional development of FET managers will have to cover broader areas such as economic literacy, development theory, development economics, leadership skills and quality management. During a period of extensive curriculum reform, such as at present, instructional leadership is also a key competency required of all education managers.

#### 5.4. Quality assurance

With a view to ensuring policy coherence within education, it would also be important and useful to align the quality-assurance measures that have been developed for schools with those that have been proposed for FET colleges. But the number of structures charged with overseeing quality assurance at national level (see section 4.2) is indicative of a lack of policy coherence in this important area, which could impede progress towards achieving policy objectives, particularly at the two most crucial operational levels – the institution (college/school) and the classroom or training site.

##### **Monitoring and evaluation of institutional performance**

Performance of schools is covered by the DoE's Whole-school evaluation (WSE) policy (Department of Education, 2000). Schools are evaluated every five years by an external team of professionals in terms of nine focus areas, including teaching and learning practices.

FET colleges in South Africa lack an adequate system of quality assurance. In many institutions quality assurance is a novel and poorly understood concept. There is limited understanding of the quality-assurance and accreditation mechanisms of SAQA, with the result that very few colleges are attempting to adapt to these requirements.

Experience in large-scale school development programmes has clearly demonstrated the importance of ongoing monitoring for consolidating and maintaining institutionalisation of new policies and improved quality standards (e.g. Paterson, 2001; Schollar, 2002). In order to avoid the resistance normally associated with top-down policy implementation, it will be important for monitoring processes and systems to have a strong developmental and supportive component in addition to ensuring accountability at the school/college level.

The different approaches intended for monitoring the work of schools and colleges may appear harmless at this early stage, but could complicate and/or compromise alignment and articulation between the two sectors in the future, particularly if a single or shared information management system is foreseen for the FET band. Current FET policy points towards a national indicator-based monitoring system for colleges, whereas monitoring in the school sector is the responsibility of provinces, districts and schools themselves and is generally not based on indicators. The result is an extremely uneven situation, with anecdotal evidence indicating that only a very small fraction of the work of schools is monitored in any systematic way.



## **Norms and standards**

As the KPMG audit has shown, FET colleges differ widely in terms of their capacity and risk profiles (Read, 2002). The same situation obtains in the school sector (Schollar, 2002). To accommodate this diversity yet, at the same time, move towards improved norms of FET provision, a value-added approach to quality assurance is recommended. As in France, adjusted norms could be set for individual schools and colleges. This can be done, for example, by applying a formula that takes into account each institution's history and socio-economic context. These norms can be raised over a reasonable period, giving high-risk or poor-performing schools and colleges more time to reach the required targets, without compromising the overall aims and targets set for the FET band in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

When a quality-assurance system is developed for the FET colleges, key performance areas will have to be drawn from an array of policies, including the following:

- The nine attributes of colleges set out in the Landscape document (see Annexure B);
- An applicable subset of the 22 indicators given in the HRD strategy; and
- The emerging framework for the FETC.

## **Qualifications**

Naturally the ultimate quality-assurance challenge for the FET band will be in the area of learner assessment – not only because this represents the output side, but also because learning outcomes and qualifications allow for direct measurement of achievement as a key dimension of quality.

For the purposes of this discussion, key features of current proposals for the FETC can be summarised as follows (SAQA, 2001; Department of Education, 2002b):

- One FETC to replace different qualifications presently being offered in different sectors, i.e. not different versions of the same qualification, but a single qualification;
- Three possible routes to the FETC (general, vocational, & technical) with optimal allowance for transfer from one stream to the other;
- Assessment based on unit standards for vocational and occupational education, i.e. colleges, and whole qualification, subject-based assessment for schools; and
- Retention of criteria for university endorsement, but possibly in a new form.

Taken together, these proposals would constitute a compromise between the traditional matric examination system and the new unit standards system of the NOF. Precisely because the design of the FETC is likely to be a compromise between two very different philosophies and approaches to assessment, the danger exists that the final product may be incoherent or of uneven quality. The manner in which this matter is resolved will have profound implications for alignment and articulation of FET across schools, colleges and work-place training.

## 5.5. Research and evaluation

While there is a significant body of work emerging around models of skills formation in industrialised countries and the extent to which such models are realising socio-economic gains, there is limited understanding of the potential role of TVET in developing countries. There is a significant question around whether FET is a primary or secondary arena for achieving the necessary skills for socio-economic growth, i.e. does it provide a viable or preferable alternative to traditional academic education? Linked to this is the question of whether FET provides only short-term gains or whether it is a key ingredient of long-term growth. Considering the varied levels of industrialisation among developing countries, the form of skills needed may differ from those of industrialised nations, and FET may require a distinct focus. These and other related questions can only be answered by means of rigorous research and evaluation programmes linked to policy implementation over the next few years.

### Research

As the FET sector develops, focused research will be necessary to illuminate policy and programme design issues. A concerted two-pronged research programme or strategy will be necessary. Firstly, further comparative research is required on TVET reform in other countries to balance out the disproportionate influence that experience in the UK and Australia have had in the initial shaping of South Africa's FET policy framework. In particular, TVET experiences in Africa are an important and untapped source that warrants focused research. For example, successful apprenticeship programmes and the interface between TVET and SMMEs (as hosts for apprentices as well as self-employment destinations) in countries such as Ghana, Sudan and Kenya invite deeper reading and analysis to inform the thinking of South Africans. Successes and lessons learnt in the newly industrialised countries of East Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Korea, and perhaps also in South American countries, may also yield valuable insights with potential local application. The following aspects may be highlighted for specific attention in international comparative research:

- Comparisons of parity between or integration of education and training systems;
- Comparisons of different kinds of TVET institutions;
- Different apprenticeship schemes; and
- The interface between TVET and SMME sectors.

As the FET policy cycle in South Africa enters the implementation phase, several important research avenues are opening up locally:

- Lessons emerging from the merger process in South African FET colleges;
- Case studies of good practice at the levels of the curriculum and institutional development in FET colleges and secondary schools;
- Focused action research linked to learnership pilot projects in different sectors and socio-economic settings;
- Surveys of local labour environments, the SMME sector, and employment trends in regions served by FET institutions;
- Research to gain a better understanding of workplace training and the role of private providers in FET;
- Further analysis of the balance between urban and rural FET provision at present, compared to what would be optimal in terms of redress and the government's rural growth strategies; and
- Probing dropout patterns in FET colleges and secondary schools to inform measures to improve throughput rates in the colleges sector and to monitor exclusion trends in the school sector.

### **Evaluation**

In view of the high expectations and immense pressures for transformation of the FET band, there may be a danger of over-hasty developments and decision-making. But precisely because the stakes are so high, it may be advisable to "hasten slowly" by grounding innovations in sound research, piloting high-risk elements or strategies on a small scale initially, and planning on the basis of sound internal review and external evaluation of preceding experience. On the evaluation side three priorities stand out in the FET band:

- Evaluation of pilot projects on learnerships that constitute an entirely new curriculum model in South Africa with the aim of extracting lessons from early on for broader application;
- Internal and external implementation evaluation to inform further policy development and planning; and
- Cost-benefit analysis of innovations in schools, FET colleges and provinces that may inform further policy refinement and implementation strategies.

## 5.6. Finances

Some of the new funding arrangements – particularly colleges' access to SETA funding – have yet to be tested. Aspects that require particular attention are incentives, financial arrangements at the interface between FET and self-employment, and addressing the urban-rural bias in FET provision and employment creation.

### **Incentives**

Incentives represent one of the most effective instruments to promote the achievement of priority policy objectives. This aspect requires specific attention in the FET finance framework, including indications of how financial arrangements on the part of the education sector will intersect with those in the labour and industrial development sectors. One priority that warrants attention is part-sponsorship of formal studies for educators in scarce study fields such as mathematics and electrical engineering. And perhaps the most pressing aspect of learnerships is incentives to encourage employer participation. In terms of the Skills Development Act (Department of Labour, 1998) an employer is eligible for an up-front payment of R25 000 upon registration of a learnership and a further R25 000 upon its completion. One concern is that the response from employers has been poor, despite these incentives. As experience in countries like Korea has shown (World Bank, 1998), there may be different reasons for this slow response. Employers may be put off by the procedural complexity of registering learnerships. Alternatively the primary problem may be that employers are not interested in sponsoring learners to complete full qualifications, but rather in specific skills or occupation-directed training. This is an important aspect of learnerships that requires further research and piloting in order to fine-tune this new policy to the actual needs and requirements of key constituencies.

### **Support for the transition from college to self-employment**

For many students self-employment will be the default economic option (other than unemployment) directly after completing their FET studies. Chances for successful transition from FET to self-employment are greatly strengthened if institutional support (financial and technical) are provided. For this reason, inter-sectoral finance at the interface between FET college training and the establishment of SMMEs warrants particular attention. Case studies of existing partnership projects that have demonstrated success in bridging the transition from college graduation to self-employment can inform the government's thinking in this regard.

### **Differentiation between rural and urban colleges**

The new funding regime could play an important part in promoting greater FET access for rural students. From the perspective of both redress and efficiency, differences between rural and urban colleges must be accommodated in the FET funding formula. For example, an "isolation index" can be applied as a weighting factor. Experience in INSET provision in the public school sector has taught us that the greater distances in

rural areas have significant additional cost implications in terms of transport and accommodation. Student transport and accommodation have also been identified as barriers to student enrolment and success rates at rural FET colleges. Other possibilities to consider are earmarked incentive funding to colleges to offer programmes at satellite sites in outlying rural areas and additional provision of bursaries for rural students.

### **Conditional grant funding as policy lever**

Currently the FET college sector receives two percent of the national education budget, which compares unfavourably with the level of state funding allocated to public high schools, given that 6% of FET-level students are enrolled at colleges. An encouraging trend over the last few years has been considerably higher growth in the state funding of colleges rather than schools. It remains the case that relative neglect of the colleges over many years has left a legacy of institutional weakness that could undermine the Department of Education's effort to develop the FET college sector into a vibrant component of the intergovernmental drive to build up the country's skills base. Given the excellent potential that the FET colleges have for contributing to socio-economic growth and development, increasing levels of employment and successful self-employment, the sector warrants a sustained injection of funds to revitalise its institutions and position them to fulfil their mission. A focused investment of substantial conditional grant funding over a five-to-ten-year period would probably be required to support the process of institutional development and consolidation that is envisaged in the Landscape document (Department of Education, 2001). The leverage potential of such conditional grant funding should be exploited fully in terms of creating incentives for priorities identified in the policy framework. In addition, funding available from diverse sources (including corporate and international donor funding) should be directed towards key policy objectives and desired synergies.

## **6 FET IN THE SADC REGION**

Precisely because FET straddles education and training, the sector can provide an important arena for South Africa's participation in collaborative SADC skills development efforts. There may be scope for complementary opportunities on more than one front, such as the development of a regional qualifications framework and FET/TVET provision.

### **6.1. FET in a regional qualifications framework**

South Africa's decisive move towards an NQF is somewhat at odds with the general preference among neighbouring countries for an examination board model. FET will in many ways be the test case for alignment and articulation of the examinations boards and unit standards models in South Africa itself. Lessons learnt in this process, and noticeable successes in reconciling the two models, will be important for the credibility and effectiveness of South Africa's leadership role in developing a regional qualifications

framework for the SADC. This ambitious initiative will require meaningful articulation between South Africa's mixed model (i.e. the NQF plus the examination board function likely to be performed by Umalusi) and the examination board systems of its neighbours.

Equivalence between the qualifications of member countries is a key challenge for SADC (Mavimbela, 2001). Different approaches are possible:

- Equivalence by statute, policy or decree;
- Equivalence by standardised testing;
- Equivalence through moderation;
- Equivalence through accreditation of institutions;
- Equivalence by systematic information sharing; and
- Equivalence through harmonisation (research, specific agreements reached over time).

Harmonisation appears to be the preferred approach for South Africa and the SADC HRD office, evidently to be supported by ongoing information sharing (SADC, 2001). By its very nature this will be a lengthy process, so it may be prudent to identify strategic points where articulation between FET-level qualifications of different countries can create opportunities for short-term "wins". In ambitious ventures such as the growth of SADC and NEPAD the potential of success to breed further success should be harnessed wherever possible.

## 6.2. FET provision

Greater alignment and articulation between qualification and education systems in the region may pave the way for possible opportunities for FET collaboration among SADC countries. One example straddles FET and workplace training: under pressure from international competition, large companies are moving to centralise training for their SADC or Africa operations in one locality in order to maximise quality and use of expensive equipment and facilities. Practical experience in South African colleges indicates that this trend could generate a need for a suitably accredited FET institution in the vicinity to provide the required theoretical training components. The proposed regional qualifications framework could play a role in creating a policy environment geared to supporting such public-private partnerships. It may be prudent to target possible opportunities of this kind for piloting and/or fast-tracking processes to establish qualification equivalence in identified sectors and between participating countries.

## **7 THE PLACE AND ROLE OF SAQA IN TRANSFORMING FET: THE FETC AS POLICY LEVER**

SAQA's function of shaping qualifications places it in a position to play an important role in policy development - in South Africa and the southern Africa region – by means of two kinds of policy instruments: regulations and incentives. SAQA is a key roleplayer in the regulatory environment that frames development in the FET band. A high priority in the short-to-medium term will be collaboration between SAQA and Umalusi in designing the FETC. This high-stakes qualification has immense potential to encourage certain behaviours from key roleplayers – especially educators and students – and discourage other behaviours. As experience in South Africa and other countries has shown, this so-called “back-wash effect” will operate whether it is deliberately harnessed or not and it provides a potentially powerful policy lever that should be applied not only with awareness of intended effects, but also in anticipation of potential unintended effects – positive and negative (Grisay & Mählick, 1991).

If the dual-track policy scenario outlined earlier does prevail, SAQA's work will be mainly in the arena of shaping the FETC from the perspective of the FET colleges, whereas Umalusi will be responsible for the FETC from the perspective of the school sector. But although qualifications and assessment systems are powerful mechanisms for stimulating and directing policy change, they are not sufficient on their own to effect implementation of new national policies in education systems (Blakemore & Cooksey, 1981; Grisay & Mählick, 1991). So, for example, TVET reform experience in countries such as France and Israel has shown that instituting a single qualification does not overcome historical inequalities in the social status of different streams. Decades after the introduction of reform policies and single qualifications covering all streams of secondary school education, general academic education continues to be seen as superior to TVET in these countries, and demand remains strongly skewed towards the former (Green & Steedman, 1993; Grisay & Mählick, 1991).

Also, while quality-assurance mechanisms and, especially, qualifications can induce improvements in the quality of curriculum delivery, such effects cannot be achieved in institutions and systems where poor quality is due to real deficiencies in capacity. In such cases enforcement of standards has a hollow ring and support measures become crucial. Foremost among these are the professional development of educators and organisation-development interventions.

In view of these considerations SAQA and Umalusi can have an important influence in terms of shaping FET, but should look to collaborate with each other and with other key roleplayers to ensure policy coherence and facilitate a holistic approach to policy implementation. In the first instance these roleplayers will include various sections of the Department of Education, including the Curriculum, INSET and Quality Assurance directorates. But success in fulfilling the ambitious policy objectives that have been set for the FET band will depend also on other government departments, particularly the Departments of Labour and Trade and Industry.

## 8 CONCLUSION

During the last few years FET has attracted a great deal of interest from stakeholders in government and the private sector, as well as local and international researchers. In particular, the Department of Education's new FET Landscape initiative, undertaken in partnership with the Business Trust has generated a surge of energy that has spawned extensive and intensive research ventures aimed at building up a knowledge base to inform policy development. All this attention and activity has created a favourable climate for experimentation and innovation, so that the sector is poised for fundamental, even dramatic change.

FET is located at the nexus of several high-profile government policy objectives, such as the integration or alignment of education and training, and forging an integrated skills development strategy. The inter-sectoral character of FET therefore characterises this band of the NQF as a test arena not only for policy innovation in education, but also for inter-sectoral collaboration between different government departments, different levels of government – national, provincial and local – and in public-private partnerships.

At the heart of all these spheres of activity lie the NQF and the national Human Resource Development Strategy (DoE & DoL, 2001). While development of the NQF has not been without problems, indications are that this national initiative is gaining momentum steadily. But months of silence following the official launch of the HRD strategy by the Ministers of Education and Labour are a matter of great concern. On the one hand, further developments in FET are expected to contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of the HRD strategy but, on the other hand, these very developments require the favourable inter-sectoral policy environment that the HRD strategy aims to promote. For both these reasons it will be important to bring HRD strategy clearly into focus in the ongoing concerted effort to develop FET.

As the discussion in section 6 above indicates, FET (or TVET) can offer a fairly well defined, yet fertile arena for piloting concrete initiatives in terms of the objectives of SAQA's SADC Project Team. But once again, the case can be made that South Africa's role in SADC could be strengthened a great deal if it were pursued as an intergovernmental thrust, as opposed to parallel but unrelated initiatives led by different ministries. Given the multi-sectoral nature of FET/TVET, a joint initiative that draws together SAQA and Umalusi (the DoE and DoL), as well as the DTI may generate synergy and momentum that could bolster SAQA's existing initiatives around the Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) considerably. But two provisos are immediately apparent: firstly, the conceptualisation and planning of any intergovernmental initiative would have to be undertaken with great care to pre-empt "crossed wires" between the agencies and departments involved; secondly, any practical joint venture with one or more neighbouring countries would potentially be quite complex, so it would be advisable to start modestly, perhaps with one or more small pilot projects. Thereafter,



progress would have to be pragmatic; i.e. on the basis of having secured key prerequisites for successful implementation on scale, such as a willingness on all sides to commit the necessary resources and adequate information systems, and ensure good communication among roleplayers.

But first it will be essential to get South Africa's own house in order. What we have learnt from policy implementation efforts in other sectors, particularly the schooling sector, is that the best way forward may be to "hasten slowly". "Slowly" for a number of reasons: Turning underperforming education institutions around may take anything from three years to seven years (Fullan, 1991), and as experience in the UK and Australia has shown, curriculum reform can take up to ten years to take full effect, even in well-resourced systems. Skills and leadership development on the scale required in FET will also not happen automatically or overnight, and the complexity of intergovernmental collaboration should never be underestimated. But "hasten" nevertheless, in the sense of proceeding boldly. Given all the above considerations, the most pragmatic approach would be to test innovations on a small scale first in pilot and demonstration projects before embarking on large-scale implementation. Such an approach would require that research and evaluation form an integral part of innovation projects and the overall FET development strategy.

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## Annexure A

### SELECT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF FET COLLEGES

Figure 1

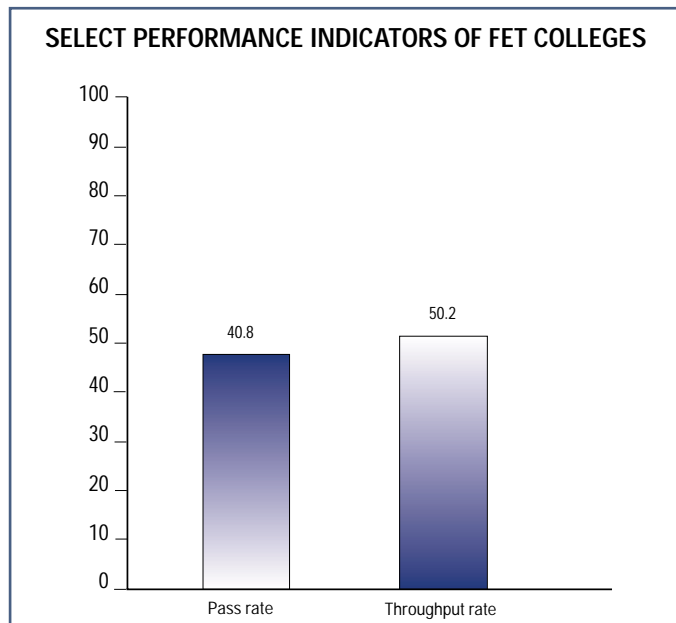


Figure 2

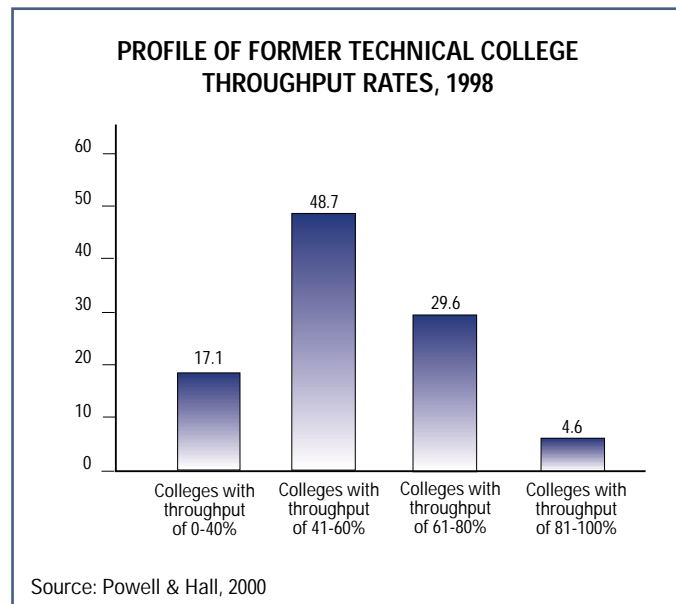


Figure 3

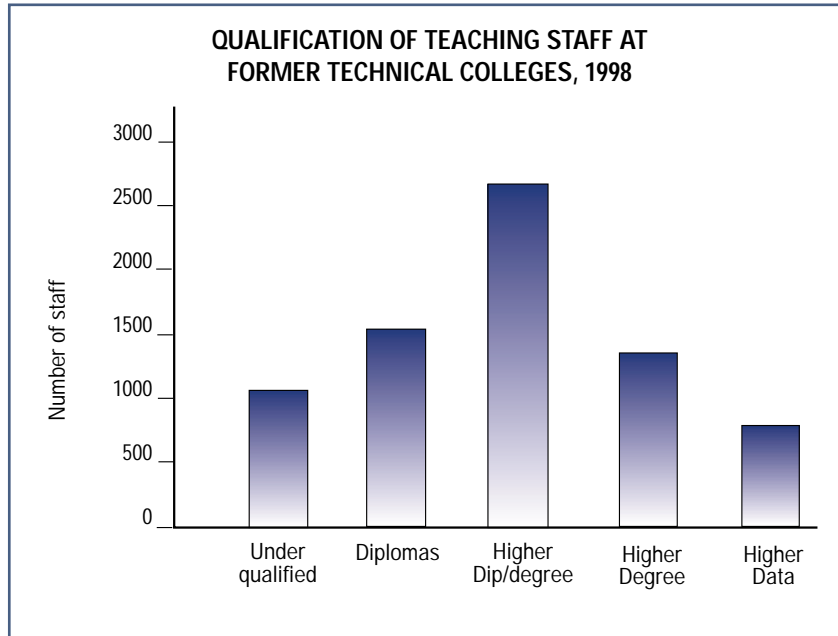
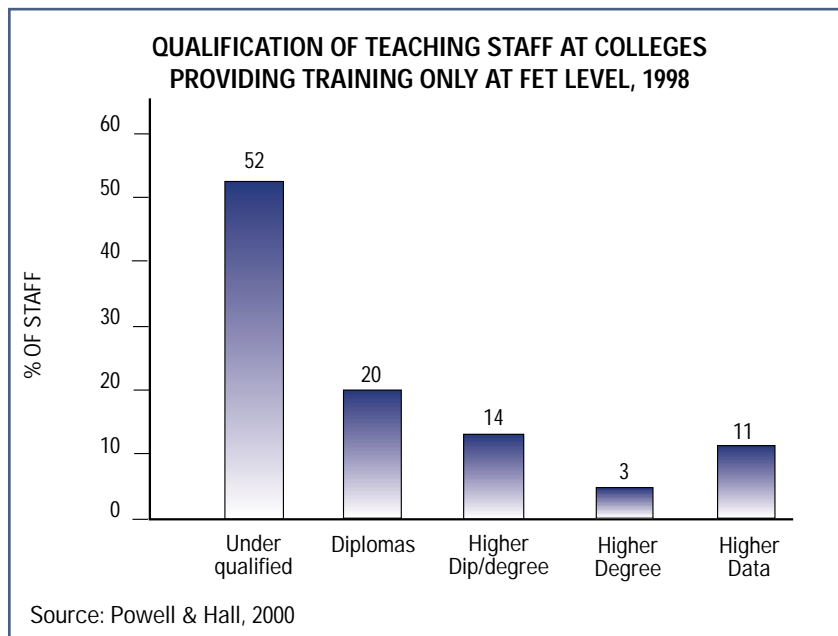


Figure 4



## Annexure B

### ATTRIBUTES OF FET COLLEGES

- 1 The newly declared FET colleges are to be large and multi-site in character. This attribute arises mainly from the fact that the newly created colleges are a result of merger processes, with no closures of individual sites.
- 2 The colleges will have greater authority devolved to them than was previously the case, with most financial, administrative, human resource and infrastructure responsibilities that were previously the domain of provincial education departments now devolved to the colleges.
- 3 Colleges will be expected to develop curricula and programmes that will be more diverse and responsive to the human resource requirements of the country and more specifically the province and the region. They will also be expected to increasingly develop niche areas of specialisation that place them in a position to provide their students with a competitive advantage in terms of entering the labour market.
- 4 Quality improvement and assurance will be key tasks of the new colleges.
- 5 In providing diverse programmes and curricula, colleges will equally have to cater for a diverse population of students. This will by necessity require the adoption of a variety of delivery modes, open and distance learning being some of those mentioned in the report.
- 6 The newly declared colleges will be required to provide learning opportunities for students with special needs.
- 7 FET colleges will be expected to facilitate access to higher education by providing a limited number of higher education programmes, preferably in partnership with higher education institutions, in order to facilitate articulation with regards to learning outcomes and credit transfer.
- 8 The colleges are encouraged to provide greater learner support and career guidance.
- 9 Colleges will be expected to pursue and develop partnerships with communities and the private sector.

Summarised from "A new institutional landscape for public further education and training colleges: Reform of South Africa's technical colleges" (Department of Education, 2001)



## Response 1: Ms Cheryl Pearce

This evening I wish to address those who have responsibility for providing leadership and for managing the further conceptualisation and implementation of FET. FET leaders are all those who have responsibility for influencing the decisions and plans to develop the FET band as envisaged in the body of legislation that impacts on it. Many, many individuals are involved in this process. They are located in different government departments, different sectors, and different institutions, and fulfil many varied roles.

My motive is threefold: firstly, to remind us of our vision for Further Education and Training; secondly, to question whether we are faithfully pursuing that vision; and lastly, to raise key FET-related issues concerning the implementation of that vision.

My approach is informed by a Freirian pedagogy that combines the language of critique with the language of possibility. It is important that we remain self-critical but it is equally important that we do not despair and that we remain hopeful, despite the difficulties we encounter on the road of reconstruction and development.

I believe we face two key dangers. The first is that we adopt a complacent, non-reflective and uncritical approach to developments in education and training post 1994. In this scenario, we no longer engage each other; we no longer challenge one another. The second danger is that because of the deeply fractured nature of what we have inherited post apartheid and because of the enormity of the transformation task, we have begun to despair. Our pedagogy should remain one of hope, one in which we are active participants in the making of our history; in this case, the making of the history of further education and training.

Towards the end of his book *The Politics of Education*, Freire advises: "We need to be subjects of history, even when we cannot totally stop being objects of history. In addition, to be subjects, we need unquestionably to claim history critically. As active participants and real subjects, we can make history only when we are continually critical of our own lives" (1985: 199).

The research paper starts at a very appropriate place in that it reminds us "the government's socio-political vision for the country is the product of wide consultation and negotiation with key stakeholder groups for the country, leading up to and beyond the formal transition to democracy".

I believe this is an important place to start since it reminds us that we who have governance or executive leadership responsibilities for FET are accountable to the citizens of this nation to deliver to the vision for FET. Our mandate is set.

In the foreword to Education White Paper Four: A programme for the transformation of Further Education and Training (1998), the then Minister of Education, Professor Bengu writes:

The consultative process has resulted in wide consensus about the policy framework outlined in this White Paper and has ensured that it commands the support of all the key stakeholders in Further Education and Training (FET). It has also laid the foundation for all of us to embark jointly on the long, complex, yet urgent and exciting journey towards the establishment of a new FET system, which is responsive to the needs of our people, efficient and effective, and accountable to its clients and stakeholders (National Department of Education, 1998: iii).

I have no illusion that the journey outlined in this White Paper will be easy. However, as I have said on many occasions before, I am confident that if we collectively commit ourselves to completing it in the spirit of the consensus and the momentum that has been achieved already, we will reach our destination, namely an FET system that will contribute to a better life for all (National Department of Education, 1998: iii).

The vision for FET is that it lies at the heart of the integration of our education and training system. FET is to be planned and coordinated as a comprehensive, interlocking sector that provides meaningful educational experiences to learners at the post-compulsory phase. The vision for FET, in brief, is to be a band that provides many different learning opportunities at the intermediate level of knowledge and skill, within different institutional contexts, to different cohorts of FET learners.

We realise that the way in which we have conceptualised FET is groundbreaking; but we have also realised that the main challenge lies in its implementation.

Five years have passed since the promulgation of the FET White Paper, The FET Act, the Skills Development Act, and the Skills Development Levy Act. Some key questions that we need to ask ourselves are:

- How far have we come to achieving this FET vision?
- Are we still pursuing that very vision articulated in White Paper 4?
- What are the factors that prevent us from achieving that vision?

It is not my intention to answer these questions. It is, however, the responsibility of each person who has leadership responsibilities in FET to respond to them.

I do believe, however, that if we are to realise our vision for FET, then we need to commit to the following five fundamental principles or practices.

The fundamental premise on which Kotter bases his book *Leading Change* is this: leadership is the distinguishing factor in bringing about organisational change/transformation. He says the following: "Leadership is a set of processes that create organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances. Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people to that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles" (Kotter, 1996: 25).

We need leaders who will look beyond their narrow sectoral interests and work towards the achievement of the "common good".

Secondly, we need to commit to a significant injection of resources into the FET system.

I think particularly of the FET colleges. The Department of Education has had the responsibility of designing and implementing a very significant change process for the technical college sector without any significant financial support except that from the Business Trust under the College Collaboration Fund. The result has been that many FET colleges are still faced with huge infrastructural and staff-capacity constraints. The lack of resources has also resulted in significant delays in the rollout plans. We cannot bring about major reconstruction and development if we do not have the human and financial resources to back them up.

A further concern is the need for a sustainable financial aid system for marginalised learners. Unless we are able to make this provision, the poorest of the poor will continue to be denied access.

Thirdly, we need to affirm our commitment to the National Qualifications Framework as central to the achievement of a single, integrated education and training system and, therefore, as critical to the development and establishment of FET.

Fourthly, we need to commit to significant and visible collaboration not only between government departments, but also between government departments and other agencies. An example of this is the recommendation made in the Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (Departments of Education and Labour, 2002) for the establishment of a strategic partnership that will facilitate the further development and implementation of the NQF. It is our sincere hope (National Board for Further Education and Training) that this strategic partnership will be realised by the by the Ministers of Education and Labour.

Last, but not least, we need to commit to the establishment of strong and effective overnance structures across the system, because therein lies our commitment to participatory democracy, as well as the means by which we are held accountable.

It is not my purpose to make light of these issues. It is important that policy makers and implementers should take due account of what research shows in this regard. However, I tend to be a pragmatist, and therefore always try to simplify things for myself. My response to all of these issues is a basic question: What is the responsibility of the education and training system to the South African FET learner?

The education and training system has the responsibility to provide the South African learner with access to quality learning. The concepts of access and quality, when held together, presuppose that the learner will be given a choice in his or her direction of study. Choice provides the learning opportunity that will best serve to enhance the FET learner's talent, her potential, and grow her knowledge and skill in the areas of her talents, her potential and, hopefully, her interests. Choice may be limited or, it may be vast and varied. We may need to start with limited but quality learning opportunities and grow the system of provision to a place where it offers "the world".

However, it remains the responsibility of FET governance and executive leaders to balance the various apparently conflicting elements that impact on FET. It is their responsibility to hold the various elements together in healthy tension, to make decisions about the demand, the supply and areas of critical need. It is also their responsibility to indicate clearly what is unattainable, why it is unattainable, and propose alternatives.

One area of critical need as raised in the research paper is in relation to the fact that less than five percent of FET graduates (schools and colleges) gain access to employment in the formal sector. While I remain skeptical about the promise of preparing learners, age cohort 16 years and up, for self-employment, it is clear that it is an option that needs to be investigated. There also appears to be some levels of success in addressing this matter in other contexts, as quoted in the research paper. The question remains whether those practices are easily transferable. We are aware that this matter is a strategic concern of at least three government departments (DoE, DoL and DTI). Each has identified ways of responding to it. It would serve the people of South Africa well if a comprehensive and sustainable joint strategy could be designed and implemented to address this need.

The research paper cautions us about the failure of policies in other countries to redirect learners from the academic pathways to TVET pathways. This caution must be heeded. I, however, wish to make a number of remarks in this regard:

Last year I had the opportunity to participate in a Danida TVET conference hosted in Zambia. The countries that participated were Zambia, Eritrea, Tanzania and South Africa. In the discussions that followed the conference, the key differences between TVET and FET were confirmed.

These differences can be summarised as follows:

- TVET does not call for an integrated approach to education and training, while FET does.
- TVET is focused on the acquisition of technical and vocational skills. It does not insist on the acquisition of language and communication or mathematical literacy or the critical cross-field outcomes. It is the latter concepts that are central to our conceptualisation of the National Qualifications Framework and that distinguishes FET from TVET.
- Central to FET as a system of learning is the National Qualifications Framework. The NQF is the mechanism by which one part of the FET system of learning achievement relates to another. The NQF ensures that learners are able to move from one learning pathway to another, from one institutional type to another, from one level of learning to another. FET, as a comprehensive, articulated system could not exist without the NQF.
- It is exactly because TVET has a narrow technical and vocational focus that it does not and cannot provide access to higher education and, therefore, is rightly seen as a “dead end” by prospective learners.

The way in which the Further Education and Training Certificate has been conceptualised is critical for success in redirecting learners to alternative learning pathways in FET. A fundamental principle in the design of the FETC is that it is required to provide access to further learning that includes higher education.

I quote from the FETC Policy Document (2001): “Each FETC will provide access to various learning pathways, both vertical and horizontal. The scope of access provided by each FETC will be determined by the qualification itself. The underlying principle in the design of the FETC then must be that the qualifying learner has the learning assumed to be in place to embark upon the study of qualifications at a higher level or at the same level with a different focus, and that through the acquisition of the FETC, a viable learning pathway is created. This underpins the concept that qualification design must favour the principle of dovetailing, i.e. exiting from one qualification must lead directly to entry to one or more qualifications at the same or higher level of the NQF”.

### **The importance of a FET communications and advocacy campaign**

The motivation for a rigorous communications and advocacy campaign is that Further Education and Training as envisaged in White Paper 4 – A Programme for the Transformation of Further Education and Training (DoE, 1998) has yet to be realised. The concept is new; a minority – mainly those who are involved in vocational education – understand it and it is only in the beginning phases of implementation. . It is therefore important that the national Department of Education (DoE) and its key partners apply their minds to the ways in which FET is communicated and advocated to the people of South Africa.

The Ministry of Education has initiated the Year of FET to serve as a launching pad for a more medium-term strategy in relation to the communication and advocacy of FET.

Since the FET College sector is still in the beginning stages of implementation, we would need to be very careful about what it is we communicate about the sector so that we do not raise expectations that cannot immediately be met. The campaign would therefore need to be conducted over a number of years, beginning with 2003 - the Year of FET. It is expected that the message will be general at the beginning stage but become more detailed as the campaign progresses and as the institutions become better equipped to deliver FET learning programmes. The campaign could continue to a high point, the year in which the first FETC is issued.

There is always the danger that rural communities are neglected in the ways in which we communicate with them as well as provide for them. The strategy will need to ensure that this does not happen and our rural learners must be given an indication of how they will be provided for in terms of access to FET.

The campaign will have a strong gender consideration in that it will highlight the opportunities for women to enter male-dominated professions. The campaign will serve to raise awareness around issues of gender discrimination.

### **The threat of HIV/AIDS**

The Department of Health and its partners inform us that our youth and young adults are those most at risk from HIV/AIDS. This section of the population constitutes the bulk of the FET target market. The NBFET therefore recommends that the FET communications and advocacy campaign address this threat concurrently with all its activities.

I believe the DoE is in the process of considering a further investment strategy to address some of these concerns.

For FET to be realised we need the simultaneous and coordinated unfolding of FET between at least two government departments, the DoE and DoL. If this does not happen, the result will be uneven and separate development of two key FET sectors. This will only serve to undermine the development of FET as an integrated band of learning provision.

### **The concept of "hastening slowly"**

The concept of "hastening slowly" is a sound one as it is used in the research paper. It makes educational sense to "ground innovations in sound research". However, there are at least two potential dangers inherent in the practice of the concept.

The two inherent dangers that I would like to caution against are:

- The potential misuse of the concept, where it becomes a matter of convenience rather than one of sound educational judgement.
- The danger of uneven development across the FET system as one part “hastens slowly” and the other parts forge ahead at breakneck speed.

Finally, I wish to conclude by honouring the many men and women who have shown courageous leadership in and passionate commitment to the process of establishing a new FET system. I salute you.

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## Response 2: Prof Jairam Reddy

First, I wish to thank SAQA for inviting me to be a discussant of the paper on the very important and neglected sector of the South African education and training system; that is, the Further Education and Training sector.

Second, I wish to congratulate the authors, Susan Meyer and Botshabelo Maja, for a comprehensive and thought-provoking paper that sharply delineates the critical challenges faced by FET.

I find little in the paper that I would disagree with or be critical of. In the time that is allotted to me I wish to highlight and emphasise certain issues raised in the paper, refer to some omissions, and make a few concluding remarks.

### Economy

In assessing the future of the FET sector the paper refers to the dual nature of the SA economy:

- (a) high-skill, high-technology occupations, the so-called “knowledge workers” driving corporate globalisation and employing a small segment of workers in the formal economy; and
- (b) small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), which provide employment for large numbers if the informal economy is included.

It is worth emphasising that the compelling point is that the FET sector has the potential for providing the necessary skills and knowledge for large numbers in the informal economy, including:

- the SMME sector;
- the unskilled and underskilled;
- high school dropouts;
- university and technikon dropouts; and
- the unemployed.

The Education Policy Research Unit of the Human Sciences Research Council is in the process of initiating research in the Zululand area of KwaZulu-Natal to ascertain how the two post-secondary institutions undergoing reconfiguration – the University of Zululand (UZ) and the Umfolozi College of Further Education & Training (UCFET) - could be part of the socio-economic development trajectory of that region. The demographics of the area are quite revealing:



- Of the 8.4 million inhabitants, 64% live in rural areas; 3.3 million are illiterate and 40% unemployed.
- Some 3 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS and there are 200 000 orphans.

Even in its reconfigured form and taking into account that the major component of its entrants are from the 18-21 year cohort, the UZ as a Comprehensive Institution, can barely make a dent in the education and training aspirations of the population of Zululand. Its present enrolment is well under 5 000 students.

On the other hand, UCFET with a network of educational and training centres and much available infrastructure can provide these opportunities for large numbers of this population: firstly, because of its open access through its network of learning centres; and secondly, because of its affordability. (The cost of a graduate from a university or technikon is of the order of R80 000 to R90 000 compared to R10 000 for a technical college graduate.)

Griffith and Connor in the USA (1994) point out that at the turn of the century, only one out of four workers would require a bachelors degree – mainly in the professional fields such as law, engineering, medicine, while three out of four jobs require some form of post-secondary education. Furthermore, workers will have to be constantly retrained for the emerging and competitive global economy. It is estimated that many of the jobs in the US economy are created by small businesses, estimated to be 18 million in 1994 and to grow to 25 million by the turn of the century.

This is compelling evidence to turn around, through investments and expansion of the FET sector, the inverted triangle pointed out by Maja and Meyer. However, the two percent of the education budget spent on the FET sector compared to the 15% in the higher education sector will simply not suffice.

The paper then enters the debate about whether the country should pursue a high-skills strategy or a low-skills strategy for economic growth. The view advanced by King and McGrath (1999) of a twin strategy appears to be a sensible one. The question is really one of balance, and in this context the view expressed by Young (2001) in which he postulated that the economic advancement of a country depends on the extent to which knowledge and skills are diffused throughout the population as a whole is the central one. The higher education sector in SA, which presently caters for 15% of the age cohort 18-21 years, cannot fulfil this role.

## Attractiveness of the FET colleges

The failure to attract students to the FET sector is “rooted deeply in cultural attitudes that have been embedded historically in the education systems in Britain and France, and inherited by countries that were formerly under their colonial rule” (Blakemore and Cooksey, 1981). This, however, has largely changed in many developed countries. For example, the UK and Australia now have sizeable, viable and attractive FET sectors. In Australia, the technical and further education sector (TAFE) enrolls 1.6 million students, which is twice the number of those in the higher education sector. The cultural attitudes that fail to make FET attractive have been compounded by the irrational education policies of post-colonial governments. Two examples illustrate the point.

First, in Zimbabwe there are two universities which, despite the problems in that country, were until recently in reasonably good shape. The Ministry chose to convert a number of their education colleges into universities, providing each of the provinces with a university; this without any increase in the higher education budget. What each province needed is an expanded well-resourced FET Sector in order to address the skills base of the population as a whole. Instead, the government policy will further weaken the already cash-strapped universities.

In Mauritius, in an island of just over a million people with a relatively small newly established university, the Ministry of Education is contemplating setting up a second university, reportedly as part of a legacy.

In South Africa’s case, we have to contend with the legacy of apartheid. During the National Education Policy Initiative meetings, one of the presenters gave a well-articulated explanation of the California master plan, and made a case for community colleges as one model for the FET sector in South Africa. In response, a young student retorted: “Excuse me, professor, but we are trying to create a social democracy in this country. Why would we want to create inherently unequal institutions to serve this new society?” (Ratcliff, 1996)

## Learnerships

Considerable faith is being placed in learnerships as a flagship solution to high-skills training for the South African economy. The paper advances evidence from a number of studies undertaken in several countries that could make this faith appear ill founded. In the United Kingdom 40% of students who enrol for apprenticeships succeed in achieving the minimum qualification; and in the service sector, only one in ten students attains the minimum qualification. In short, these learnerships are not effective for the development of generic vocational competencies that are not grounded in a particular job or context.

In the USA, despite the spending of some \$20 billion on over 150 different job-training programmes between the 1960s and the 1990s, there is little to show in earning differentials or economic upliftment.

There are a number of ways to explain this disappointing result. Typically, job-training programmes are of short duration (10-15 weeks) and are provided to individuals who are likely to be high school dropouts and who often have a range of other social problems such as drug addiction and alcoholism in addition to the lack of technical and vocational skills. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to enhancing basic competencies such as vocational skills, and cognitive and personal attributes. The quality of teaching in these programmes leaves much to be desired. The real problem, however, is the separation of job training from education. "As a result, one way to develop a more effective education and job training system would be to recombine them so as to link job training with educational programmes using the community colleges as the conduit between the two ...in the process, community colleges and technical institutes will gain a critical role as the linchpin connecting job training programmes to the educational system" (Grubb, 1996).

If learnerships are to succeed in South Africa it is necessary to connect them more organically and intrinsically to the transformed FET Colleges so that skills training is buttressed by basic competencies in vocational skills and cognitive and personal attributes, as indicated above.

### **International models**

The paper pleads for searching beyond the United Kingdom FET model for lessons for the development of the South African FET sector. It mentions that lessons and models should be drawn from Africa (e.g. Ghana, Kenya and Uganda) and Asia (e.g. Malaysia, India and Korea). In this context, it is worth mentioning the example of the India Institutes of Technology. Shortly after independence in 1948, the Indian government decided to establish several prestigious institutes of technology. They established five such institutes, funded them generously and affiliated each one to a similar institute in five countries: the USA, the UK, Germany, the Soviet Union and France. Today these institutes, known as the India Institutes of Technology (IIT), have developed their own character as world-class institutions and train high-quality scientists. They are oversubscribed and, although they lose about half of their graduates to overseas recruitment, they have been successful.

Using this example, might one explore the linking of FET colleges to similar institutions in different countries; for example, one province linking to US community colleges, another province to the UK FET colleges, and the third to the German model over a five-year period? The rest of the six provinces could develop a home-grown product. Comparative studies would be necessary to evaluate the outcome of such an experiment, and the results should be fascinating. In addition, there would be a good possibility of accessing funding from each of these different countries to support such a project.

## Research and the FET sector

Should FET colleges be engaged in research? A study conducted in 2000 observed, "FET institutions have a crucial role to play in appropriate knowledge production and in the capacity development of their learners to meet such new demands" (HSRC, CCD, Government of the Netherlands, 2001: 49). It may be a mistake, given the limitations of time, experience and facilities to expect all universities and technikons in South Africa, let alone FET colleges, to be engaged in what Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation characterised as the "scholarship of discovery which, at its best, contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university" (pp 17). The focus in FET colleges must surely be on teaching; for after all, Aristotle said, "Teaching is the highest form of understanding" (quoted in Boyer 1996: 23). Boyer regards teaching as more than a routine function; "...those who teach must be well informed and steeped in the knowledge in their fields.... Teaching is a dynamic endeavour involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning... teaching at its best means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well" (Boyer, 1996: 24).

## NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a holistic, comprehensive, integrated framework for the socio-economic development of Africa. At the heart of this initiative is a strategy for human resource development. While NEPAD speaks about strengthening education systems, universities and institutes of technology, it does not refer specifically to the FET sector. The importance of the FET sector in education and training for skills development and job creation - and taking into account Young's (2001) assertion that the economic advancement of a country depends on the extent to which knowledge and skills are diffused throughout the population as a whole - provides the space and opportunity for the insertion of the FET sector as critical to the realisation of the goals of NEPAD. The paper could have elaborated a good deal more on this aspect rather than make no more than a cursory reference to it.

## Reverse transfer

The idea of reverse transfer is an interesting one. By this is meant that a student who acquires a three-to-four year bachelor's degree in the humanities or social sciences, for example, proceeds to a FET college to be trained in a particular skill for one or two years, whether that be computer skills, photography, graphic design, etc. This is a powerful combination of general education and vocational training, well suited to the changing nature of the workplace in the information- and technology-driven age. This kind of reverse transfer is common practice in the Australian TAFE System. In the USA, one out of ten community college students possesses a bachelor's degree. Reverse transfer is rare in South Africa for two possible reasons: elitist notions of education, and the quality of offerings in FET colleges. An improvement in the quality of the FET colleges should place them in a position to attract degree students and make them more employable.

## Conclusion

Referring to the question of black empowerment, Moeletsi Mbeki states, "What we need are entrepreneurs, people who start new businesses, take risks and create new jobs. Under black economic empowerment, people take no risks. It encourages people to live of the fat of the land" (Mbeki, 2003). Both the HET and the FET sectors should be steeped a great deal more in the business of education and training their students to establish businesses in the SMME sector and to create jobs. Tracking of recent graduates and investigations in job creation should become a critical part of our research endeavour. Effective black empowerment will only become a reality if the broad mass of the poor and unemployed in the country are engaged in some form of meaningful and productive labour.

Trow (1987) puts it very succinctly: "What strikes an outsider... is the enormous gulf that exists between further and higher education in Britain. Further and higher education are simply not part of a common system of education, marked by diversity and a broad division of labour. And yet these colleges of further education are remarkably similar to our community colleges which are very much part of the higher education system in the USA - they are linked in every one's mind as part of a common if differentiated enterprise. But the greatest price the UK pays for its elite system of higher education ...it does not address one of the most important requirements of this age - the creation of a broadly educated society that continues to learn. A learning society... is central to the great social and economic transformations that Britain along with other advanced societies is currently undergoing." No country in the world is rich enough to support a system of mass higher education as in Britain, maintains Trow. "But genuine diversity would mean institutions operating at different levels of cost as of standard, and the possibility of lower cost higher education would allow academics and officials at least to think about expansion of higher education." In South Africa's case, that means expansion of the FET sector.

The UK has gone a long way since the 1980s in rejuvenating its FET sector and its rising prosperity may well be attributed in part to this factor. The message to South Africa is clear. Invest, expand and improve the quality of the FET sector in order to provide education and training opportunities for the broad mass of its people: a prerequisite for socio-economic development.

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## Response 3: Ms Janet Lopes

I come from the Engineering sector and we have only two forms of greeting there, which are “good evening colleagues” and “comrades”, so I hope you will all accept that.

I promise to be brief and, since I am not an academic, you can trust my word.

A question was asked at a recent workshop:

Why were there enormous numbers of motor scooter sales in the 1980s and virtually no sales in the 1990s?

The reason: The invention of the fax machine.

Therefore, when we think of the FET sector - and I will confine my comments to the colleges in the FET sector because of their critical importance to business - let us bear in mind the story of the scooters being overtaken by the fax machine.

Recently I found an old advertisement in a dusty drawer in one of our offices. This had been placed in the Star in 1971 and advertised careers in the engineering industry.

Applicants could tick four little blocks:

- The first, if they were interested in an apprenticeship;
- The second, if the interest was in technician training;
- The third, if they were interested in university; and,
- the fourth, please note, was to be ticked if the applicant was a female!

We have come a long way since 1971 but business still has some real concerns with regard to the FET colleges. The points that I will raise are based largely on the concern that business has with two main areas: policy and provision.

The FET college sector is severely under resourced – you cannot do much with less than two percent of the education budget - and it is quite clear that this allocation is not adequate.

Added to this is the fact that curricula in some programmes are antiquated. I am reliably informed that the trade theory for pattern making was last updated in 1952. (I fear that there have been some advances in the world since 1952!)

Some excellent work on establishing the profile of qualifications in the colleges was done by NBI, and a matter of real concern to our industry is the lack of experience that lecturers have of the world of work. It is not unusual for a lecturer not to have been inside a workplace for 20 years!

Learner support is another area of concern to business. The researchers tonight have done some excellent work on this and it is an issue that is absolutely critical. If we do not give learners more meaningful support than taking them as far as assessment, walking them to the door and saying goodbye, we are not doing enough.

Business does not believe that the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET) is getting the resources, attention and commitment from government that it needs. Government should either provide meaningful support and take the NBFET seriously, or it should disband the NBFET.

The national learnership campaign being driven by the Department of Labour for unemployed learners offers a host of very real possibilities that the FET colleges should be considering. Together with these are the possible Group Training Centres that may be developed for 18.2 (i.e unemployed learners as opposed to current workers in the workforce). This initiative is one of many opportunities offered by the Skills Development Act and those of us in the National Skills Authority are very conscious of the need to use these opportunities.

This raises a further issue in the need for an improved interface between the FET colleges and the labour market. This interaction between the FET sector and the labour market is imperative, and pilot projects should be supported and used as learning opportunities, particularly in the areas of learnerships and skills programmes to strengthen the interface. An improved interface would prevent the communication of wrong information from colleges to learners. For example, at the Steel & Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA) we have had calls from learners who have been advised by colleges to contact us for advice about trades that have not been offered for a decade, such as electroplating.

Rules of engagement between colleges and business should be based on negotiation and the need to find real consensus on matters that are of critical importance to both business and the colleges. Innovative private/ public partnerships can play a major role in this regard.

The SMMEs and linkages with the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are in need of real attention. There are some remarkable things happening in the SMME area and it is critical for colleges to be involved in these. In the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA (Merseta), in which I am involved, all the SMME interaction has been outsourced to be managed by the three employer organisations. This points to a need for colleges to consider dealing with SETAs and with the major employer organisations related to the different SETAs.

My hobbyhorse is career guidance and I have a dream of the colleges housing cluster-based Career Guidance Centres. There is no way that each college can be expected to provide expert advice on a thousand career options but, structured as clusters such as a Financial Service Cluster or a Manufacturing Cluster etc, expert career guidance becomes viable. These clusters should be developed as an effective tool to provide real and tangible, value-adding guidance to learners.

Then we have the Accreditation and Quality Assurance nightmare. We have all made inputs into the Ministerial NQF review process and believe that this must be simplified to assist employers. Anyone who has tried to explain the accreditation process to a small employer will know that the process is too difficult. In simplifying the process, we will go a long way towards meeting the ongoing need to align the labour market to the FET sector.



In conclusion, South Africa is a developing country in which research is vital. International benchmarking should be done in a sensible way. However, we should stop going to the UK and Australia. (I know they have a tendency to speak English there, which is great.) We should stop going to Germany even though the beer is great. On the other hand, if you go to Brazil, you will find some of the most interesting and innovative projects going and they are dealing with real issues of access and redress.

We must be careful that our FET institutions do not become “giant parking lots for the unemployed”. We cannot afford that socially, economically, or in any other sense. The cliché that FET Institutions must be labour-market driven, flexible and focused remains true.

To get going, the FET sector needs more than the passion of the educators and the officials paid to drive the sector. The FET sector needs and must find major champions. It needs people who have the power to exert the leverage to get the money, commitment and energy flowing into the sector.

## PLENARY SESSION - FACILITATED BY MR SAMUEL BA ISAACS, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SAQA

**Question:** Prof J Jansen, University of Pretoria

How often do we use the word "should"? I thought 1994 was about the "should" language. I didn't hear enough about an analysis of what we should be doing, what is our practice, how good or bad it is? I want to suggest that unless we move from the "should" language to what we are actually doing, we will become stuck in our reasoning with an inability to move forward.

**Response:** Prof Jansen you raised the issue that there are a lot of "shoulds" and what are we actually doing. I think it is easy for one to be tempted to talk more to what we are doing, but I think if we look at FET particularly, you will realise that you mentioned 1994; we didn't have any FET in 1994. So I think to some extent we have to talk about "should", because we are still in the process, which one could call a trail-and-error process. To some extent, whilst we are doing, we must also talk about "shoulds".

Linking up your question with Glen Fisher's point, in talking about "shoulds", we need to begin to say where do we go from here? And I think according to the three provisos that I gave right upfront before our presentation, it's quite tempting to have this broad, big picture debates because sometimes they are quite nice and academics enjoy them. But at some point I think you need to begin to differentiate and, where possible, disaggregate and understand what it is we are dealing with. This is the point I made at the beginning, but I hope that some of the context issues and some of the pointers that we raised upfront will enable us to go back and think in that way.

**Question:** Prof J Kuiper, University of the North

I detect a kind of "schizophrenia" in talking about what FET should be able to do for us, which is education for skills. It seems as if we are trying to push FET in two different directions. On the one hand we have formalised FET where we say it must be market and labour related and linked to the formal economy. On the other hand, we say we have a very big informal economy linked to SMMEs.

**Response:** It might appear as if we are schizophrenic, but it is not of our own making. We realise increasingly that formal employment does provide some limits and by default there is the notion of self-employment. One should caution the dangers of romanticising that notion - that is the realism we have to deal with.

I am not sure to which extent we have in the FET debate begun to problematise and understand the very notion around self-employment. By default we have been talking more about formal employment. What we are realising from research that is emerging, is that you end up with graduates who are not in employment, and who, not out of any fault of their own, end up using all kinds of self-survivalist, self-employment mechanisms. What we are saying in the paper is that when we have that default option, how can we begin to interact with it? What kind of possible solutions are we able to provide?

**Question:** Ms M van Rooyen, Assessment College

The notion of lifelong learning and adult-employed training has not been addressed in the paper. I believe that more of these learners are in private providers than in public institutions. Therefore I find that there has been a lack of this perspective in the paper.

**Response:** Adult learning and private providers. I just want to comment on private providers. We did a study when I was at the HSRC on private provisioning in FET. The key findings of that study was that there was no private provisioning in FET. Most of the private providers that claimed to be based in FET were actually located in Higher Education. So, I think that is partly why we don't talk to that notion. You also raised the issue of adult learning and I concede that we didn't talk too much to that point.

**Comment:** Mr G Fisher

There are a number of issues to be addressed in ensuring transforming FET provision, and some trade-offs would be inevitable. It might be necessary to identify a number of crucial issues on which to focus as a matter of priority.

**Response:** Included in the above response to Prof Jansen.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Ms Susan Meyer**

Ms Susan Meyer is an independent researcher. Her professional work includes multi-disciplinary conceptual, theoretical and empirical research on quality in education; education policy research and committee work, mainly in school improvement and programme evaluation; the RDP Primary School Nutrition Programme; values in education; and HIV/AIDS in education.

She completed her MEd at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1993.

### **Mr Botshabelo Maja**

Mr Botshabelo Maja is the Executive Officer: National Skills Authority, Senior Executive Manager: Skills Development Advisor: Department of Labour. Until recently, he was a Chief Research Specialist at the HSRC. In February 2001 Mr Maja was seconded to the National Department of Education for eight months to coordinate the National Landscape Task Team that developed a strategy for the Minister of Education on the restructuring and merging of technical colleges across the country.

He completed a MEd at the University of the Witwatersrand and is currently enrolled for a PhD.

### **Ms Cheryl Pearce**

Ms Cheryl Pearce has for the past ten years worked mainly on donor-funded projects, which have focused on the development of further education and training. Ms Pearce has been the Chairperson of the National Board for Further Education Training (NBFET) since its inception in 1999.

She completed her MEd at the University of the Western Cape.

### **Prof Jairam Reddy**

Prof Jairam Reddy currently works as a researcher and consultant in higher education and is an Associate Research Fellow at the HSRC.

He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Dental Surgery, University of Birmingham; Master of Science, University of Manitoba; Doctor of Philosophy, University of Western Cape; and Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

### **Ms Janet Lopes**

Ms Janet Lopes is Head of the Skills Development Services at the Steel & Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (Seifsa).

She completed her BA and Higher Diploma for Educators of Adults at the University of the Witwatersrand, and holds diplomas in Personnel Management, Journalism, Literacy Teaching and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).



