

On Wednesday, 11th April, Emeritus Professor John Aitchison presented a lunch-time address on Howard College Campus: **The Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training: What's in it for us?**

This Green Paper has enormous significance for all Universities and Higher Education as a whole and the Centre for Adult Education is very grateful to Professor Aitchison for giving us his time and sharing his ideas about this document. The CAE, who organised this presentation, was particularly interested in what this Green paper means for a new system of adult education Community Learning Centres but Professor Aitchison also cast his critical and incisive eye on what the Green Paper means for Universities and FET colleges - in fact Higher Education as a whole in South Africa.

Professor Aitchison highlighted the challenges noted in the recent Wolf report on vocational training in the UK, many of which are mirrored in this Green Paper, for e.g. concerns over the current qualifications systems and a lack of progression (or articulation).

He questioned the quality of the education to be offered if the Government goes ahead with the Green Paper's proposed enrolment increases from 900 000 in Universities today to 1.5 million and an increase in FET, (as well as other colleges and adult education centres) to 4 million – these figures to be achieved in the next 15 years – given many of the challenges listed in the Green Paper.

After discussing briefly the terminology used in the Green Paper, Professor Aitchison gave a more detailed account of the challenges that the Green Paper identifies and gave us his responses to them. He mentioned NEETS (those mainly young people **Not in Employment or Education and Training**), proposed funding options, and concerns over qualifications' regulatory bodies in Colleges and at Universities. The Department of Higher Education and Training sees the regulatory system as complex and difficult to understand and calls for a simplification of the NQF. Also the Green Paper notes disappointment with the role the SETAs have played in recent years.

Two important points that Professor Aitchison expressed concern over were firstly, that much of the Green Paper is based on out-dated and unreliable data (but the Department of Higher Education and Training is aware of this problem), and secondly that it has not taken into account the crucial issue of the poor quality of Department of Basic Education schooling output – which he labelled mediocre.

The 3 key points that came out of Professor Aitchison's summary were:

1. Articulation!!
2. Data!!
3. A simpler NQF.

The public, particularly those in the Education sector, have been invited to comment on/respond to this Green Paper by the end of the month. If anyone is interested in a copy of Professor Aitchison's presentation, please contact Cathy Rich richc@ukzn.ac.za .

Responses to the Green Paper

The public has been invited to respond to the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training. Written responses should reach the Department at the address below not later than **30 April 2012**. The Department of Higher Education and Training will also be engaged in a series of bilateral and multilateral consultations with stakeholders from January to the end of April 2012.

Copies of the Green Paper can be accessed on the Department's website at <http://www.dhet.gov.za/Documents/Legislation/GreenPapers/tabid/189/ItemId/3098/Default.aspx>

Written comments on the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training should **preferably be emailed** to Mr Zakhele Hlongwane at the following address: hlongwane.z@dhet.gov.za