

FET Amendment Bill 2012

Submission from the Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres

6 September 2012

The CEAT Task Team and its brief

The Departmental of Higher Education and Training Task Team on Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) was appointed in April 2011 and submitted its Report on 25 May 2012. Its task was to investigate and recommend an alternative and more effective institutional form for addressing the education and training needs of adults and out-of-school youth.

The terms of reference of the Task Team included consideration of the policy and legal implications for a new community education and training system, with particular regard to current legislation and the making of recommendations on suitable governance mechanisms for the community education and training centres.

The Final report of the Task Team includes the following statement:

The legislation that derives from the eventual White Paper should be comprehensive in scope, and should recognize the need to go beyond bureaucratic amendments to existing legislation, to crafting or amending legislation that will give effect to a coherent, integrated and articulated system. The Task team proposes two steps:

Step 1: The Bill to provide a framework for colleges and adult education to become a national competency, and should make provision for the creation of Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres as institutional forms in the sector. The Task team is of the view that the current Further Education Colleges Amendment Bill of 2012, does **not** provide adequately for this. In addition, the Bill should **not** repeal the Adult Education Act, since it provides the current framework for existing institutions and it is premature for all the PALCs to simply be renamed Community Education and Training Colleges.

Step 2: Once the Institutional forms have been agreed upon, DHET should spearhead a separate Community Learning Centre Act that derives from the White Paper for Post School Education and Training, and provides for the objectives, criteria, governance, and funding of Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres, for differentiated approaches within the sector and for the establishment of the Adult and Youth Community Learning Agency.

In addition to the above general statement on the current Bill, we would like to add the following more specific comments:

Comments on the FET Amendment Bill

1. In relation to the amendments adding Community Education and Training Colleges to the FET College sector and reconstituting Public and Private Adult Learning Centres as Community Education and Training Colleges

The Green Paper and eventual White Paper on Post-School Education and Training will provide the policy and institutional framework for adult (and youth) education and training. The recommendations from the CEAT Task team take a different track with regards the institutional proposal than what is at present in the Amendment Bill.

In particular, it proposes the addition of Community Colleges as a distinct institutional form to the Colleges sector and secondly, the creation of Community Learning Centres, as a sub-sector of such Community colleges.

The reconstitution of all Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) as Community Education and Training Colleges is therefore immensely problematic, particularly that currently the great majority of the PALCs are effectively one or borrowed classrooms in public schools with a few part-time contracted instructors. .. to the sector needs substantial legislation, not a one liner. Though they can be renamed by legislative fiat they do not have the capacity to take on the burdens of College legal requirements, nor does the state have the capacity to rapidly transform them into “colleges”. The Task team in its report makes proposals on the ‘minimum requirements for Community Learning Centres.’

In summary, substantial planning to create some Community Colleges and Community Learning Centres is needed and this legislation is therefore premature.

2. Need to distinguish between Community Colleges and Community Education and Training Centres (or Community Learning Centres)

If the amendment are proceeded with we would suggest that Act 16 clause 1.(a)(ii) be rather replaced by:

(ii) a Community College

3. The brief of the proposed Institute to serve the college sector

Though we heartily support the idea of such an Institute we believe that some of the clauses amending Chapter 7A Clause 43B. (1) are too generic. They need to be made more specific to the area of further education (a),(b),(f),(i),(m). Sub-clause (k) on the direct provision of management training is too ambitious too. It should be qualified (as other sub-clauses are by “assist in the provision”.

4. The issue of the use of the term “continuing education and training”

Generally the amendments do a mechanical replacement of the words “**further** education and training” with the words “**continuing** education and training”. [E.g. 1.(f)(g)(h), 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 43B(p), Schedule: 21, 22, 23, Act 46 (17), Act 48 (18), and Act 59 (20)]

We believe that this is a severe terminological mistake and will if anything exacerbate existing terminological problems with using the word “further”.

There is existing confusion with the term “Further Education and Training” as it can be taken to mean a band on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF levels 2 to 4) [a very specifically South African sense] or a general sort of description of vocationally-orientated post-school education, that is at a lower academic level than higher education and usually provided to young school leavers [a fairly well known international use of the word and which correctly describes the work of the FET Colleges]. One notes that in the United Kingdom it applies to all post-school and cultural activities provided for by local authorities.

By contrast “continuing education” is a well know international term for adult education that takes place at any level, and which applies specifically to education and training that follows on – after, and as a complement to – the initial cycle of education.

It is true that term is used fairly broadly in the United States of America, particularly of part-time, second chance and non-traditional and older students in the college sector, but it applies to the entire range of primary, secondary and post-secondary educational opportunities offered by public and private agencies, whereby participants of any age engage in academic, vocational, leisure time and personal development (often of a non-credit nature).

We believe that it would be confusing to describe the largely initial education provided by the current college sector as “continuing education”. Most of the existing qualifications in the current College sector are initial education and training, they are not continuing education at all. An obvious example is the National Certificate (Vocational).

The definition in Clause 1 (b) takes this confusing issue of the term to the extreme:

‘continuing education and training’ means all learning and training programmes leading to qualifications or part-qualifications at levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008

This is an absurd definition, particularly given that most current certificated continuing education takes place at level 5 and above of the NQF. For example, a person training as a school teacher does a B.Ed. or a teacher’s diploma which is initial education. It is **not** continuing education. When that teacher is qualified and comes back for mandatory an annual refresher course that is continuing education.

So we would argue that using the term “continuing education” for all current FET College sector work is seriously misleading and contrary to accepted international and national usage. Certainly FET Colleges do some continuing education but most of their work is initial education and training. The college sector should be defined as that doing Further Education and Training that includes technical, and vocational education and training **and continuing education**.

5. ON ABET CAPACITY AT UNIVERSITIES

- 5.1 The Green Paper for Post School Education and Training proposes policies that will see a massive expansion in quantity and improvement of quality in youth and adult education in South Africa. This transformation will *inter alia* require the maximum use of existing adult education capacity in universities and elsewhere for policy, planning, practitioner development, teaching and learning materials development, monitoring, evaluation and research.
- 5.2 The period after 1994 provided great possibilities for growth and expansion of adult education, as proposed in various documents, programmes and projects including the Multi-Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training (1997) and the Nationals Skills Development Strategies. Unfortunately, due to a range of circumstances in the post-1994 period, most of South Africa's higher education based resources for youth and adult education (supporting literacy and adult basic education, worker and trade union education through to FET College lecturer training and upgrading) have been downgraded and undermined within the universities.
- 5.3 This submission requests the Minister to issue an advisory notice to institutions of higher education as well as the National Research Foundation requesting them to ensure that the surviving capacity in this field does not suffer further attrition but is preserved and enhanced, to assist in the Ministry's endeavours to transform the field of post school education and training. Ideally each province should have at least one university-based centre that responds academically and programmatically to the wide range of local socio-political and economic realities. The advisory notice should also be seen as part of the Ministry's proposed revitalization of Human and Social Sciences as proposed in the Charter.
- 5.4 In the period of the late 1970s until the mid-1990s a number of adult education units, centres and departments were built up in South African universities. Although this obviously required the support of the respective universities, much of the growth their capacity and impact was not funded directly by the universities but from self-generated income (such as through fees for extra mural programmes for the general public) and from donor funding and research contracts that formed part of the aid given to the broad anti-apartheid movement within South Africa.
- 5.5 Many of these units gained a reputation of being some of the best university-based adult education centres in the world. Prominent amongst them were the units at the universities of Cape Town, Western Cape, Witwatersrand, Natal (later KwaZulu-Natal), Transkei (later Walter Sisulu), and the North (later Limpopo). Many of them played a significant supportive role to the mass democratic movement in the struggle years of the 1980s (particularly at Natal and the Western Cape) and they also played a role in the pre-democratisation education policy option initiative, the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). The Centre for Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has played a significant role in policy and planning of adult education and has pioneered the upgrading of FET College lecturers' teaching qualifications.

- 5.6 These units have also played key roles in what universities now called community service and/or engagement. The staff in these units have track records as progressive and socially-engaged scholars and activists who value the role of universities as important public spaces that nurture critical citizenship and democracy. Much of their work falls within an analytical framework synonymous with the political economy of democracy, development and the ‘national question’. Their work, which favoured building close links with poor communities and marginalised groups in South African society, has been undermined by what is known today as “the ornamentalisation of the human and social sciences”.
- 5.7 Since the latter part of the 1990s, the support given to these units has withered and they have suffered the following debilitations:
- Internal university restructurings have seen the organisational integrity of many of these units destroyed as they have been merged or incorporated into other schools or departments and asset stripped of key staff.
 - Mechanical funding formulae based on regular formal university student enrolments (which did not take into account the role these centres for adult education played in non-formal education and community engagement) reduced their size (as they were “not profitable” or “paying their way”).
 - Donor funding dried up as foreign donors (understandably and correctly) redirected their aid to the new democratic government or to other more needy countries.
- 5.8 Five examples of the damage done to this national resource are the fates of four of the most prominent centres.
- At the University of Cape Town the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies was closed. A few relict staff serve in a unit devoted to Higher Education Transformation.
 - The University of the Witwatersrand closed its Department of Adult Education and its Centre for Continuing Education. There are no “adult education” staff at all now.
 - The University of South Africa closed its Institute for Adult Basic Education and Training (which had trained nearly 80 000 ABET practitioners many of whom form the bedrock of the successful Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign) though there is a remnant adult education unit in the College of Education).
 - The University of KwaZulu-Natal closed the School of Adult Education and Higher Education, and the Centre for Adult Education is currently experiencing difficulty in retaining this status and in danger of being restricted to delivering formal programmes and self-funded non-formal work. Recently, a post vacated by an academic staff member dedicated to adult education has been recreated as a shared post with another discipline. Another administrative post devoted to non-formal work in African languages materials production has been identified by university management as “no longer required”.

- At the University of the Western Cape, the Centre for Adult and Community Education (CACE) has been absorbed into a Division for Lifelong Learning. Its work remains restricted with much focus on building capacity within the university and offering formal adult education programmes.
- 5.9 The *Green Paper for post-school education and training* presents an opportunity to rebuild adult education, based on its historical roots, as a cultural marker of South African society. Today, the need for a wide range of programmes, socially-engaged scholarship and community engagement remain critical and are congruent with the policy proposals expressed in the Green Paper.
- 5.10 This submission urges a moratorium on any further attrition of the adult education base at South African universities given that this resource will need to be galvanized and enlarged if it is to perform the role identified for it in the Green paper, which includes support for Community Education and Training Centres as well as practitioner development.
- 5.11 The Minister is also requested to consider the possibility of ring fencing modest financing for this adult education base in the interim (possibly gained through the National Skills Fund).
- 5.12 Recently adult education staff at higher education institutions around the country met and resolved to set up an association to further higher education's role in supporting youth, adult and community education in the country. The Minister is encouraged to meet with representatives from this body, particularly in relation to research capacity and the need for a national institute for adult education.



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