

4 October 2011

Mr. John Pampallis
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Dear Sir

**Re: DRAFT GREEN PAPER ON POST SCHOOL EDUCATION, SECTION ON
COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRES**

The Task team on Community Education and Training Centres at its meeting on 3 October 2011 discussed aspects of the latest version of the Draft Green Paper relevant to its brief and wishes to make the following submission/propose the following amendment to the section:

7.3 COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRES

South Africa has a long history of finding innovative ways to provide adults with opportunities to learn. These range from the first workers' night schools started in 1919, to the myriad of popular education programmes that was a key feature of the liberation struggle and sectoral organisations. These initiatives provided adults and young people with skills (literacy, numeracy, communication) as well as developed their capabilities as individuals, sectors and communities to contribute towards social change and social justice.

Building on these experiences, the post-1994 education and training framework embraced the concept of lifelong learning, recognizing that learning takes place throughout a person's life and in many forms. The main provision effort was initially directed to formalizing a system of Adult basic Education and Training (ABET) in Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) and industry sites. Secondly, efforts were made to eradicate adult illiteracy through two campaigns, and more specifically since 2008 the *Kha Ri Gude* campaign. In addition much adult and youth learning also take place through a variety of non-formal community and popular education initiatives and projects run by community based-organisations, trade unions, social movements and government departments.

PALCs are the only directly funded institutions that offer general education to adults. Currently there are over 3,000 centres across the country, which serve about 265,000 learners—a tiny fraction of the adults who have need of education and training. These centres may operate from public schools, community centres, or other institutions. They are focused on offering ABET qualifications, including the General Education and Training Certificate for adults, a qualification issued by Umalusi and assessed by the Department of Higher Education and Training. There is a standards based approach though no core curriculum and the quality of assessment is very variable assessment across provinces.

However, many learners who study at PALCs do not study ABET but are enrolled to write the Senior Certificate examinations, although these numbers have declined significantly since the National Senior Certificate (NSC) replaced the Senior Certificate without provision for adult learners. Very few adults graduate with an ABET level 4/NQF level 1 and hence few currently move to the next level. Most of the learners enrolled for grade 12 are in fact school drop outs or people who want to re-write the matric examinations. Public adult learning centres are currently the only state provision for this purpose.

There are also private adult learning centres. This is a difficult group to categorise, as many providers have a diverse range of offerings which may include (consistently or inconsistently) formal provision towards the ABET General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) at level 1 of the NQF. The Department lists as private adult education centres those that function similarly to the public centres, including NGOs and community-based organisations. However, there is currently no national register for private AET centres.

The majority of teachers in public and private adult learning centres are part-time contract workers without tenure. Furthermore, most teachers are in possession of pedagogical qualification to teach children in formal schools, rather than the appropriate andragogical qualification to teach adult learners. Some Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and SETAs offered ABET practitioner programmes at NQF Levels 4,5 and 6, which did not articulate with other and some ABET practitioner qualifications were not recognized by the Department of Education because they did not meet the Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) requirements. This has led to high staff turnover, leaving the sector without a hub of permanent professionals. This severely affects long-term planning and serious career and learning path development for both learners and practitioners. Most learners in the sector study part-time, a relatively slow learning process which requires long-term management and planning.

A vision for community education and training

The current system of provision for adult learners and young people who dropped out of school before completing is inadequate. Firstly, the exclusive focus in the current ABET approach on general education often means that they fail to attract large numbers of adults and young people interested not only in completing their schooling but also in gaining labour market and sustainable livelihoods skills, as well as those interested in learning for general self-improvement or cultural and community development. In addition, it does not acknowledge or harness the vast potential for development and social cohesion that exists in the various community and popular education initiatives run in communities and sectors.

From an institutional perspective, the FET college sector has a poor “second chance” track record of getting large numbers of youth through the Grade 11 and Grade 12 school syllabus (NSC). It also has a poor track record of working with young adults who have a poor schooling profile and whose greatest priority is to find employment. They would benefit from some form

of work-based education and training. The colleges have limited capacity in doing this, largely because of their poor linkages with employers and with other state schemes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Learnership schemes run by SETAs. Nor do FET colleges necessarily provide the most appropriate platform for meeting the education, training and work needs of unemployed youth and adults.

The community education and training approach internationally represents an approach to adult learning that seeks to facilitate a cycle of lifelong learning in communities and offering routes to enable the development of skills, (including literacy, numeracy and adult learning) to enhance personal, social, family and employment experiences. It further seeks to assist community organisations, local government and individuals to work together to develop and enhance their communities, by building on their existing knowledge and skills.

The DHET intends to absorb the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) into a category of institutions provisionally named Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs), which can cater for the provision of second-chance learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults. These CETCs will hugely expand the current limited and narrow offerings of the existing PALCs which only offer general education programmes and could also offer knowledge and skills leading to sustainable livelihoods outside of the formal sector. They will be a diverse set of institutions, including public, private, and community owned establishments. A key issue to address will be the articulation and partnerships between these institutions and others in the post-school sector. These multi-purpose institutions will help create an expanded and strengthened post-school system which is integrated but diverse.

To assist in this process, a Task Team has been established to look into alternative and effective institutional forms to address the needs of out-of-school youth and adults. Amongst other things, it is considering policy and legislative implications of new institutions in order to investigate and recommend relevant programmes to be offered by CETCs and investigate funding modalities and governance mechanisms.

The first step in this process would be identifying the strongest PALCs that could play some role in offering general adult education programmes as well as training and orientation for sustainable livelihoods. Identifying FET colleges that could, by virtue of their spatial location and community reach, be transformed into CETCs would form part of this investigation. The second step towards building these institutions would be creating an institutional identity, providing core funding, and employing at least a core of educators on long-term contracts. These institutions would initially offer ABET and the National Senior Certificate for Adults, but would gradually increase to other offerings, such as skills and other programmes meeting local needs.

The training of educators for AET programmes in CETCs and FET colleges will need to be addressed, particularly in view of the known decline in previously strong HEI capacity because it is such a poorly subsidized element of HEI provision.

Funding

Public adult learning centres are currently funded on a learner-enrollment based model. New Norms and Standards for Public Adult Learning Centres were published in December 2007, have been subjected to public comments, and were implemented in January 2011, although unevenly across provinces. As is the case for the colleges, the funding norms for Public Adult Learning Centres make provision for programme funding. One problem with this is that PALCs do not offer programmes but learning areas. Another is that learner-enrollment based funding in very weak institutions does not allow for the building of institutional capacity. Changing this funding model will be an important first step in the process of building PALCs into Community Education and Training Centres, to ensure some core funding, as discussed above, supplemented by programme-based funding.

Submission on behalf of the Task team on Community Education and Training Centres.

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