



From PALCs to CETCs: An acronymic analysis

Umalusi Conference, May 2012, Pretoria.

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Background

- During apartheid era, adult education provided through “night schools”
- ABET Act of 2000 provided for establishment, governance and funding of Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs)
- Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2012) proposes establishment of Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs)

Current situation

- 2011: 3000 centres
- PALCS provide ABET levels and “second-chance’ matric
- 312 077 (or 265 000) students registered at PALCs (not clear how many redoing Matric, how many ABET)

The failure of PALCs

- Very poor throughput rate to General Education and Training Certificate
- Weak centres: under-resourced; no clear institutional identity and capacity; under-qualified and transient staff
- Problems with curriculum and qualifications: no core curriculum and insufficient standardisation of assessment across provinces
- No connection with Kha Ri Gude programme or other non-formal programmes

Unpacking the Acronyms

PALCs	CETCs
Public	Community
Adult Learning	Education and Training
Centres	Centres

The Green Paper and CETCs

- Purpose
 - “To address the needs of
- Target group
 - out-of-school youth and adults”
- Different to PALCs
 - “alternative institutional form”
- BUT
 - “will include existing PALCs”

Envisaged offerings of CETCs

- “provision of second-chance learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults”
- General education programmes (ABET and NASCA).
- Knowledge and skills leading to sustainable livelihoods outside of the formal sector

From “Public” to “Community”

- What does “community” mean here?
- How will CETCs engage with culture, concerns and resources/assets of local communities?
- How will it move away from the failed “school” model of adult education?

From “Adult Learning” to “Education and Training”

- PALCs were not able to resolve the relation between “education” and “training”.
- What is the envisaged relation between “education” and “training” here? – general education programmes (education) and “livelihood” programmes (training)?

The problem of purpose

- Green Paper has a very strong economics discourse: reduce unemployment, expand job opportunities, sustain livelihoods.
- It acknowledges that “focus on employment is not to the exclusion of all other development and transformational goals”.
- How does this relate to other educational concerns in communities: civic education; peace education and conflict resolution; health education; family life and family literacy; cultural education?

The problem of location

- Envisaged that PALCs (mainly school-based) will be “absorbed” into new CETC system.
- Problem of association between PALCs and schools (adults with negative experiences of schooling taught like children at the place where children are taught)
- How do you create a new institutional identity? PALCs failed to break with “night school” identity.
- Kha Ri Gude used a whole range of locations and managed to move outside and beyond “PALC” mentality. How will this experience inform CETCs?

The problem of participants

- Problem of PALCs being flooded by drop-outs from a dysfunctional schooling system.
- Need to create a clear “adult learner” identity
- Need for trained adult educators but university adult education capacity is shrinking.

Conclusions

Changing acronyms won't change reality.

1. **Research:** Need for a thorough analysis of adult education needs within communities. (Green Paper acknowledges need for research: Who will do it? With what funding?)
2. **Educator cohort:** Need for a committed and qualified cadre adult educators (Who will train and support them? What career trajectories will they have?)
3. **Institutional identity:** Need for a clear community education identity and a mobilising focus (NASCA?)
4. **Community engagement:** Need to embrace local cultures of learning (How will communities be engaged?)
5. **Learning from our experience in educational reform:** Need to avoid repeating past failures and embrace and build on successful adult education interventions (How can we draw on resources and expertise both within and outside the state?)