

MAKING BEST USE OF LOCAL EXPERIENCE:

PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING CENTRES AND COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES

Michael Gardiner

Abstract

This article explores four community based education projects which have been undertaken across South Africa over the last decade. These projects are discussed so as to reflect on the planned introduction of Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs/CLCs) across South Africa, as outlined in the Green Paper on Post-school Education and Training and the Report of the Task Team on CETCs. The article outlines a number of positive messages and important policy implications for the CETCs and CLCs that emanate from these projects, while it also identifies a number of potential challenges which the emerging CETCs are likely to face if they are to be truly community centred education and training centres, which have the potential to empower their local communities.

Introduction

In January 2012 the South African Ministry of Higher Education and Training released a Green Paper on the proposed Post-school Education and Training system for public engagement and with the intention that this would lead to a White Paper and eventually to legislation. The Green Paper¹ represents a most important step in the maturation of the post apartheid education system in South Africa, as does the Report of the Task Team on CETCs. These documents address all dimensions of post-school education, seeking to bring them into productive harmony with each other and with the people of this country. In doing so, they propose something new in our current array of possibilities for post-school education: Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) and Community learning Centres (CLCs).²

This article juxtaposes the ideas about CETCs in the Green Paper and the thinking of the Task Team which was set up by the Paper, with the experiences of researchers within the Education Policy Consortium (EPC)³ over nine years of community based research in education. The intention is to add progressive flesh

¹ Department of Higher Education and Training. Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training, January 2012. Pretoria.

² *Ibid.* pp. 30-32.

³ This Consortium dates from 2001 and has included researchers from the Education Policy Units at the Universities of Witwatersrand, Fort Hare, KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and the NGO, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). It now includes the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation at the University of Johannesburg as well as the Nelson Mandela Institute at the University of Fort Hare.

and substance to the conceptual frameworks which the two agencies of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) have articulated so far.

Specific comments on the proposed CLCs are contained in the covering letter with the submission of this article.

A most important point to register at the outset is that the inclusive excellence of the proposed CETCs should not be subverted by the dull function of offering only standard or modified existing courses. That will make CETCs mere bureaucratic extensions of a system that is already unmanageable in its arrangements and complexities. The newness, the freshness and the potentialities of CETCs as an idea and as a means of addressing the educational needs and aspirations of the urban and rural poor should not be lost in a systemic maze. The CETCs should be distinctive in their positive and energetic presences, their openness to the communities whom they serve and their persistent usefulness, both short- and medium-term, to the people with whom they engage. In so doing they will add a vibrant presence to many areas of human existence in South Africa that seem depressed and directionless at present.

It is for this reason that the CETCs should not add to the multiple forms of cultural, economic and other forms of domination that people in villages and towns have to contend with. As Hoppers points out, the tendency in South African education is to subject learners to “cultural debriefing” and “epistemological disenfranchisement” by means of confronting them with “contradictory and morally contested traditions” of Western thought.⁴ Whereas CETCs cannot be expected alone to address so massive an epistemological challenge, their presence should be one which is enriching, liberating and a means of expanding communal and individual possibilities which proceed from the real and discerned needs of community members.

Given the chance to think afresh about the insights gained by the EPC into community struggles for education, and the chance to imagine a role for CETCs, it is the intention of this article to show that those experiences and understanding that have been acquired through long-term research can offer ways to think about the nature and form of CETCs that might most appropriately serve the needs and desires of historically marginalised urban and rural communities.

⁴ Catherine Odora Hoppers. 2004. The Cause, the Object, the Citizen: Rural learners in the Void of Intersecting Policies and Traditions of Thought. *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 11, 3. Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, pp. 21 and 18.

Two visions for CETCs

The two visions for South Africa's CETCs thus far have come from the Green Paper itself which was followed up in short order by a substantial and thoughtful Report compiled by the Task Team.⁵

The Green Paper sought to offer a reconceptualised alternative to the existing Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs), some 3 000 of which currently offer general education for adults, so as to remedy their shortcomings. These are that they,

- serve only about 265 000 learners, a tiny fraction of the millions of adults who are in need of education and training
- focus entirely upon Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) qualifications of varying kinds
- have reverted increasingly to meeting the needs of school dropouts and those who wish to rewrite the Matric examinations and not the other multifarious needs and aspirations of adults.

Baatjes has been looking into ABET in its various forms in South Africa since 2002 and has published articles about the PALCs and their inadequacies.⁶ What needs to be added is that PALCs are locked into local educational orthodoxies such as National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels, barely modified school subject curricula and they offer little that speaks to the actual needs of adults other than obtaining qualification in something. However, though PALCs are weak conceptually and organisationally, there are many in South Africa who can and will attest to the extent to which access to adult education of any sort enabled them to use their additional educational experience to very good use. But it is, as both the Green Paper and the Task Team's Report indicate, at the *conceptual level* that a breakthrough is needed in the provision and use of education by adults in South Africa who are community-linked, be it in rural or urban areas.

So, instead of the current system of PALCs, the Green Paper seeks to create learning opportunities that "attract large numbers of adults and young people interested in not only completing their schooling but also in gaining labour market and sustainable livelihood skills" (p. 31) Furthermore, and of particular significance is the statement that CETCs are intended to attract "those interested

⁵ 'Imagining Community Education and Training Centres', a Report on Consultation with Communities in Three Provinces. Prepared by Ivor Baatjes and Tsakani Chaka (Supported by Britt Baatjes and Lerato Mawela), April 2012.

⁶ See for example, Baatjes, I. and Mathe, K. 2004. Adult Basic Education and Social Change. In Chisholm, L. *Changing Class*. London: ZED Books; Baatjes, I. 2004. Norms and Standards for Funding Public Adult Learning Centres. *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 10 (6). Johannesburg: Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand; Baatjes, I. 2008. Review of ABET in South Africa (1995-2003). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

in learning for general self-improvement of cultural and community development” (p. 31).

There is an emphasis in the Green Paper’s claim that current ABET “does not harness the vast potential for development and social cohesion that exists in various community and popular education initiatives” (p. 31). Here is a broad concern with social and communal needs that CETCs should to address in ways that are and have been exemplified by the best NGOs, CBOs and other forms of ‘popular education’ rooted in the community’s cultural matrix.

In its vision, the Green Paper states the following:

The community education and training approach to adult learning internationally seeks to facilitate a cycle of lifelong learning in communities, and offers routes to enable the development of skills, (including literacy and numeracy skills) 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. (p. 31)

This is appropriately idealistic and visionary, in the most important of directions. The direction most clearly discerned here is one of ‘engagement’ with communities, their organisations and their structures.⁷ CETCs are not then to stand aloof from their communities, behind literal and metaphorical fences, using architecture and other features to differentiate themselves from the surrounding houses and homes or implementing routines that conflict with those of the community, such as happens in many rural villages especially between families and schools.

If CETCs are to build on the “existing knowledge and skills” of community members, then the staff of the CETCs need to know what these are. And it is not enough to say that CETC staff should be “children of the manure” or be “our own timber” as Eastern Cape and other communities express it. For local ‘knowledge and skill’ will have to be understood and translated into forms of understanding that is both transmissible and capable of being developed beyond itself. And that requires highly skilled people who have the openness to what Mokubung Nkomo has called “alternative epistemologies”⁸ and who also have the intellectual flexibility and breadth of knowledge to see the potentialities of such local abilities in relation to other traditions of knowledge.

The Green Paper’s vision correctly distinguishes CETCs from Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges and other educational institutions. This is essential

⁷ Derrick Swartz addressed the complex question of ‘engagement’ for universities as a survival mode in his keynote address, ‘New Pathways to Sustainability: African Universities in Search of Meaning in a Globalizing World’. Proceedings of the Conference, Universities in Southern Africa as Catalysts for Sustainable Rural Development, 6-7 March 2008. Johannesburg: CEPD, pp. 11 to 23.

⁸ Mokubung Nkomo. Reflections on the Conference, and Closing Comments. Proceedings of the Conference, ‘Universities in Southern Africa as Catalysts for Sustainable Rural Development’, 6-7 March 2008. Johannesburg: Centre for Educational Development, p. 53.

to do. CETCs should not, then, offer to prepare people with qualifications for employment in the formal sector. Nevertheless, there will be expectations on the part of community members that this is what CETCs, so happily accessible, ought to do for them. The differences between vocational training, as in the case of FET colleges, and the acquisition of skills and knowhow through the CETCs is a great one but difficult to sustain and to justify when considering the expectations of people on the ground. Careful and considerate thought will be needed in designing the CETCs' ways of introducing themselves to communities and in ongoing negotiations and interchanges with community members and their organisations so as to establish gradually and inexorably the true nature of that CETC in that location.

The Baatjes/Chaka Report addresses this matter briefly in its section on 'High unemployment and poverty', pp. 15-16. People are desperate to find ways of freeing themselves from the cycles of poverty and the wasteland of unemployment. When people have attended a CETC so as to develop a certain proficiency in welding, or bricklaying or baking, how will they be given recognition by potential employers for what they have achieved? It is clear that means will have to be found to provide such graduates with tangible evidence of what skills and abilities they have demonstrated to the CETC staff. *But this necessity should not lead directly into the maws of the NQF and its juggernaut of certification processes.* If they do, CETCs will become minor functionaries in a welter of big players and will be devoting precious time and energy to those less important aspects of community education, namely the tedious and resource-consuming preoccupation with certification and validation. And we know what a bureaucratic jungle that is. In other words, some alternative means of persuading outsiders of the value and meaning of successful CETC learning experience will have to be found. For example, is there a role for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) here? However, CETCs will need to ensure that communities and community members learn through experience the value of what the CETCs offer. This will need to be an important part of the CETC outreach programmes. Furthermore, the pilot introduction of CETCs will need to research matters of this kind.

The planned improvement in the quality and calibre of the FET Colleges will take much of the anticipated pressure of expectation off CETCs and free them to engage with people in communities instead of being yet another disburser of qualifications that often lead nowhere. There is a strong case to be made for the location of more FET colleges in rural areas, where they can cater to the very real demand for qualifications and formal skills.

This issue opens up the matter of CETCs and the qualifications game. It is the position of this article that CETCs should have as little to do with formal qualifications as possible. There remains, though, the task of accommodating those who want to rewrite Matric, enabling those who need and want to complete their schooling and those who need to top up training for the award of a National Certificate for Adults (a recently introduced qualification, called NASCA).

It is recognised that as alternatives to PALCs, because of their location close to communities and owing to the desperate need for various formal forms of adult educational opportunity, that CETCs inevitably will have the task of being bases for the provision of instruction that leads to formal qualification. There seems to be no alternative. Thought must be given about how to reconcile in a single educational entity two deeply antithetical approaches to learning.

Matric rewriting, the topping up of formal schooling and NASCA courses should comprise a single wing of the CETCs which focuses on formal accreditation. In other words, these aspects should form a separate 'school' within the CETC. The main section of the CETCs should engage with communities in the spirit and terms suggested by the four community-based research programmes that are outlined in this article.

The DHET's Task Team that was constituted by the Green Paper made a number of important points. Some of these are:

- A tripartite understanding of the term 'community' as locality, interest and function
- A progressive understanding of some models of community education
- Aspects of community mobilisation and organisation which are crucial to community education
- The centrality of participation in the processes of education, citizenship and democracy.

These four conceptual pillars are ramified by an emphasis in this Report that

- no single model for all CETCs would be appropriate in the light of the heterogeneity of communities
- both formal and non-formal CETC programmes should be flexible and should be "very specific to communities rather than general and broad"
- learning experiences should be democratic, where there is a respect for student rationality, the offering of alternative perspectives and the drawing of distinctions between social and natural reality, and
- programmes should be integrated and issue-based rather than discipline-based, and be free of charge.

Findings of EPC community-based educational research projects

The Education Policy Consortium's initial programme was based on seven objectives to:

- enhance research collaboration within the EPC itself and with its partners
- provide a critique of social policies nationally

- develop a capacity for such research and scholarship among EPC members and its partners
- encourage policy dialogue and influence policy-makers
- produce multidisciplinary knowledge
- investigate and use different research methodologies such as critical and participatory methodologies
- publish the products of such research in various forms.⁹

A number of research projects sprang from and were associated with the EPC, but four of them in particular have undertaken community-based research. It is these that speak most directly to the concept of CETCs. And one key shift represented by research engagement at community level is the focus from research *for* or *on* to *with*.¹⁰ Furthermore, researchers found it necessary to get beyond the externals of the school and the community, for example, and to reach as closely as possible into the real complexities within situations. That shift in the approach by researchers has been primarily attitudinal rather than procedural and represents a break with utilitarian, tick-box approaches. Consequently, terms such as ‘democracy, human rights and social justice in education’ were applied to all aspects of people’s lives and not only to the forms of education practised by communities.

Education Rights Project (ERP)

Begun in 2002 and led by the Wits Education Policy Unit,¹¹ this project has produced 19 booklets thus far, dealing with questions of the rights of people and communities as they affect all those involved in education, and schooling in particular.¹² The ERP researchers base their stance towards education and society on the thinking and practice of Paulo Freire and his followers and in this case their attention has been directed mainly towards urban communities. Succinctly, their approach is to call mass meetings, offer people opportunity to speak about their concerns, and conduct rights workshops around those issues which inevitably create the need for research. The ERP then partners with academics, experts, people with community insight and special interest groups to flesh out the issues and to take them to communities as part of interactions which are democratic and dialogic. Thereafter the booklets are published in accessible format.

⁹ Enver Motala. 2007. Introduction to Cliff Malcolm *et. al.* 2007. *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education*. Papers presented at a Conference of the Education Policy Consortium. Johannesburg: Centre for Education Policy Development, p. 7.

¹⁰ Paul Kgobe, reflecting on the E2000+ project to CEPD staff, 17 May 2005.

¹¹ The ERP is now based at the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation (CERT) at the University of Johannesburg.

¹² Booklets cover the rights implications of: HIV/AIDS; sexual violence; the education rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; language rights and schools; religion and schools; disability; school governing bodies; the costs of schooling; admission policy; adult learners; corporal punishment and bullying and, up to the present a further six topics, including racism and education.

The ERP is explicitly 'political' in its orientation and focus, and bases itself on joint research between itself and the community as a process of participatory action research. It stresses social accountability and seeks to create among communities an 'emancipatory consciousness'. Where injustices or violations of rights persist, communities are encouraged to take political, legal and other action.

The ERP's style is also fundamentally educative in that it makes communities aware of their rights and the ways in which those rights may be claimed, mobilising people through workshops and organising experts to work with communities to produce publications on education rights for learners, parents and educators.

The question that a project such as the ERP raises for CETCs is how interventionist in community affairs the CETCs should be as an aspect of their commitment to 'engagement'. And then there are matters of verification; how much community support and agreement there might be for this issue as against that issue. What strategies could CETCs follow so as to get clear and comprehensive understanding of what the real and important issues are as well as what their significance actually is? All the complexities of 'voice' and representivity are clustered around this matter which CETCs, we believe, ought to address.

And there are also issues of which the community members are oblivious but which CETC members perceive as of central importance to the quality of their lives. Should CETCs then follow an educative path in its relationship with communities? This would seem to be unavoidable and to be welcomed provided it is done through community structures. See, for example, the Community Education Forum (CEF) experience below.

There must be and will be political contestation over which forces and groups direct the attention of CETCs to priorities, community affairs, local events and the capacity to be influential. One should expect the composition of CETC advisory boards or councils¹³ to fluctuate and this should be endorsed provided that limited terms of office are a requirement. Communities are not static entities and CETCs thus should shift their focus accordingly.

In Cato Crest (a part of Cato Manor in Ethekwini) in 2005, the EPC's Community Education Forum project plunged into a political vortex and the tensions seemed insoluble until a wise and powerful sangoma took the Forum chair and she arranged for each political interest to be represented on the Forum committee.

In brief, the ERP offers a trenchant perspective on the manifold issues that each CETC will encounter, and offers ways in which matters such as these can be managed very productively.

¹³ We are aware that governance issues for post-school colleges are under debate.

The Nelson Mandela investigation into Education in South African Rural Communities (NMF Project)

In 2002 the EPC and the HSRC came together on behalf of the Nelson Mandela Foundation to launch an investigation into rural poverty in South Africa through the lens of education. This project sought to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods during 2003 in the three provinces most affected by the impoverishing 'homelands' policies of the past. This was a large and complex project and it produced considerable quantities of data¹⁴ which have been made public in one form only, in the report, *Emerging Voices* (2005)¹⁵ which conveys aspects of the rural plight as exemplified by a focus on schooling.

The NMF project's quantitative research was wholly orthodox even though it was persuaded to include some open-ended questions. Essentially, from a conceptual and methodological perspective, it broke no new ground. Some of its findings were very useful, but the guts of NMF project was located in the qualitative dimension which relied on an elaborated and systematic version of participatory research.¹⁶

Every sector of the selected communities in the three provinces was drawn into the participatory rural appraisal type research process and given means, through crafted workshop procedures, to express their responses to three questions in particular:

- What is the experience of the rural poor with education?
- What is the relationship between education and rural poverty?
- What can be done to make education better serve the rural poor?

The picture delineated by *Emerging Voices* captures many of the responses to these over-arching questions. Community members were given opportunity to tell their own histories, to identify those parts of the village which were a source of joy and strength and those that were painfully and embarrassingly deficient; they took pictures of these sites and spoke at length about what those meant to them. Young people (13 to 18 years old) undertook self-selected research topics into school dropouts, teenage pregnancies, prostitution, drug and alcohol abuse and presented their findings to the community at large in dramatised form. Long interviews with caregivers, out of school youth, educators, parents and community leaders were conducted; school children wrote essays accounting for the school routines and the rest of their usual day. Added to this were journals

¹⁴ This data is held by the HSRC, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Centre for Education Policy Development. The CEPD does not hold the quantitative data that was generated by the HSRC.

¹⁵ Published jointly by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the HSRC.

¹⁶ See pp. 144-153 of *Emerging Voices* for details.

kept by Community Researchers¹⁷ and those of the EPC researchers who visited the sites for days at a time, sleeping in the villages and engaging with community members.

For many EPC researchers this was a new and liberating experience once initial fears and uncertainties were confronted. Community members were engaged with in a joint process to unearth what people were able and wanted to say in response to those three broad questions. And their comments are as relevant today as they were in 2003.

The NMF project demonstrated that given encouragement and focus, communities can direct their belief in the value of education into coherent ways of thinking and acting. Central to the participatory process of research was the formation in each village (except in the Eastern Cape, where the traditional leaders would not tolerate any democratic presence) of a Community Reference Group which oversaw the four-month research process, supervising the EPC researchers, the Community Researchers and the responses of the people of the community. It was to them that EPC researchers went on arrival, and to whom they reported at the closure of each research phase.

Now, in relation to CETCs, the question arises: with whom will the CETCs consult on an ongoing basis in their interaction with communities? What structures, formations and organisations will they be able to bring together so as to have a constant and credible line of communication with entire villages, locations, townships and suburbs? There is no need at this stage to make hard and fast decisions about this, but to register that an organic but partly formalised relationship between the CETCs and the communities that they serve will have to be established. Some villages, such as in Tshatshu, Eastern Cape for example, have a Village Council, another will have a 'Development Forum', as in the Balaganani section of Davhana in Venda. Then there are the once ubiquitous Civics which might find new roles for themselves.

This question relates to some of the principles upon which the qualitative dimension of the Nelson Mandela project was based.¹⁸ The research procedure sought, for example, to ensure that the project left people empowered. The importance of this was confirmed when a traditional leader's choirmaster composed a song which had the words,

... before you came to us, we did not understand how we got here, but now that we understand our present, we are able to plan for our future.¹⁹

¹⁷ Two community members in each village acted as Community Researchers and were paid a stipend for doing so.

¹⁸ See *Emerging Voices*, pp. 147-148.

¹⁹ M J Maswanganyi na Makomba Ndlela Group: 'Xintu xa Macganga no 1', (CD) MAK 2007. Pat Mabandla Music Productions.

Perhaps one of the most important inclinations by researchers and educators to be avoided is the 'deficit' attitude to the situations in which communities, most of whom are located in poor rural and urban settlements, find themselves today. This requires more than the acknowledgement of those positive aspects and attributes which each and every community, even through sheer survival, has displayed.

First and foremost, as few assumptions as possible should be made by outsiders as to what community needs actually are. But what should be anticipated as well as deliberately engendered, is a multidimensional perspective. For example, the claims to validation by both indigenous and exogenous knowledge need to be kept simultaneously in the learning experiences offered by CETCs. Without local community input, CETCs will end up offering only one dimension of knowledge and forego necessary tensions at conceptual and practical levels. Exclusion of local knowledge will also ignore and fail to develop the knowledge 'capital' of communities.²⁰

The Community Education Forum Project (CEF)

By 2004 EPC researchers were ready and available to undertake further community-based work, one that would bring schools and communities into conjunction with each other. This time the sites would include an urban community, which was a particularly poor section called Cato Crest, the 'least developed' of the ten sections of Cato Manor, alongside the City of Durban.

The basic intention of the CEF project was to provide a public space, a forum, in which the educational concerns of each community could be aired and discussed. Given the evidence from the Mandela rural education project that relations between schools and their communities were often less constructive and co-operative than they might be, it was decided by EPC researchers to use a representative forum as a "space for discussions between community members and educators about the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement in local schools".²¹

On reflection with the power of hindsight, there were assumptions behind this Project that should have been interrogated more intensively than they were. Nevertheless, this Project produced an astonishing array of community initiatives owing to its looseness and flexibility. Furthermore, its very unexamined nature meant that there were constant surprises, unexpected and unanticipated events in all communities and that the Project became deeply embroiled in the turbulence of each community, so much so that researchers found that they were using the term, 'trouble methodology' to describe how to proceed, meaning that

²⁰ Catherine Odora Hoppers. 2004. The Cause, the Object, the Citizen: Rural School Learners in the Void of Intersecting Policies and Traditions of Thought. *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 11:3, p. 23.

²¹ Michael Gardiner. Introducing the Community Education Forum Project. Mimeo. 19 November 2004.

only when there was 'trouble', was the Project getting close to the heart of matters.

One of the CEF project's requirements was that each community should compose its own history which should be read to and approved by the people of the community at large. This was intended to be, and was, highly contentious, and the reasons for such turbulence are significant for the kinds of interventions that CETCs might undertake.

Researchers found in each community that it was impossible for recent history to be compiled. In the twin Pedi-speaking villages west of Polokwane, the scars of conflict between pro- and anti-government factions were still evident in the burnt houses and forced relocations. In the Venda site, the chief torturer of the Venda homeland government was residing unobtrusively in the village. In Tshatshu, the corrupt and brutal actions of the former ruling Sebe family were too recent to mention, especially given that the family was still active in community affairs locally.

In other words, there are still deep and unresolved issues within each community, given the political and local sequences of events over sixty and seventy years. The one community that could speak with pride and assurance was that of Daggakraal, between Amersfoort and Piet Retief in Mpumalanga, because it was one of two communities that had successfully resisted incorporation into the Bantustan removals programme.

On the other hand, people in Cato Crest were uncertain what might be meant by 'community' or "umphakathi" in their case and came up with at least four meanings:

- a community is a place where it does not matter who you are because if you live in the same place, no matter what race you are, you are regarded as a community member whether you are rich or poor
- the community consists of people who live in the same place, help each other when in trouble, whom you can tell them about your problems and where caring and sharing, in the spirit of *ubuntu* dominates the thinking of the 'community'
- another notion is that anyone who lives within a walkable distance is a member of the community – this idea was held by young and older people, owing to the centrality of walking in their lives
- and yet others stressed the importance of time in the process of becoming part of a community, though the opinion was also expressed that "if you sleep and wake up there, you are a community member".

This lack of definition is compounded by the perpetual drawing and redrawing of boundaries in Cato Manor, plus the overlays of municipal and ward demarcations that do not coincide with each other.

What this points to is that CETCs in urban areas particularly are likely to have to define their 'community' as consisting of those who make use of their services and engage with them. This might apply to rural communities as well. Ways will need to be found of meeting community representatives who can speak for the variety of people who use CETC services.

The experience of researchers calls into question the usefulness of the Baatjes/Chaka definition of 'community' as "place of locality", the sharing of interests and "community as function".²²

The experience of the CEF project is that bringing community members and educators together into a forum has profoundly political implications at ground level. The CEF project welcomed this for its own sake and because it was inevitable. Such a Forum widens democratic practice in communities and confronts traditional leaders, for example (who in urban areas might be party bosses) with representative bodies that take the widest possible interpretation of 'education' to mean all community matters.²³

The CEF project's theoretical and conceptual interests

Owing to many factors such as the personnel involved in the Project, the EPC's ongoing seminars and publications as a dimension of the South Africa-Sweden Systems Research Collaboration, and the decision by EPC researchers in the Project to resist systematic apriorisation of theory, the CEF project is the most conceptually explicit of all the EPC's community-based research projects.

Meetings, workshops papers and publications²⁴ provoked continuous attention to the theoretical and conceptual questions arising from the encounters between researchers and the situations at the research sites.

Given the fact of the published articles in footnote 24, factors that emerged from thinking and research behaviour (rather than methodology) are only sketched

²² Imagining Community Education and Training Centres. April 2012. 2.1 The meaning of community, pp. 4-5.

²³ One of the most far-reaching challenges encountered initially by EPC researchers at the outset of the Mandela project was what a group of men in the village of Siyandhani announced at the beginning of the first workshop: "Yes, we would like to talk about education in our lives, because it is important. But before that, we need to discuss the state of our cattle, the broken dipping tank, problems in this village with the supply of potable water, the state of the main road that runs through this village and issues of unemployment".

²⁴ Michael Gardiner. Meeting a Present Need: Reflections on the Community Education Forum Project. In: Cliff Malcolm, Enver Motala, Shireen Motala, George Moyo, John Pampallis & Bev Thaver. *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education: Papers presented at a Conference of the Education Policy Consortium*, March 2007. Johannesburg: Centre for Education Policy Development, pp. 35-48.

Michael Gardiner. 2007. Research and Democracy: A Quest for the Particular. In: C Odora Hoppers, B Gustavsson, E Motala & J Pampallis. 2007. *Democracy and Human Rights in Education and Society*. Örebro: Örebro University Library, pp. 199-216.

here in order to highlight issues germane to the placing of CETCs in communities and to provide the basis for the final EPC community-based project that is described in this article, the Community Literacy and Numeracy Group (CLING) project.

The stark premises on which the CEF project proceeded were:

- to invite a community to establish an Education Forum as a public space in which community members and educators could meet to discuss the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement and then combine the resources of the community and the school in order to do so
- to appoint two Community Researchers to liaise between the Community Education Forum and EPC researchers
- for the CEF to commission the writing of a community history as well as to compile a political profile and an account of the educational activities within the community outside of formal schooling. These compilations should be endorsed by the community at large.
- EPC researchers were to remain outsiders whose influence was mediated by the Community Researchers and the CEF while communities researched themselves and embraced their schools, using local expertise as a basis on which to engage the expertise of the educators.
- that the role of EPC researchers was not to solve problems, resolve disputes, provide materials nor make claims to special insight. They were to take intense interest in what transpired and be alert to the nuances of complex situations. The CEF could approach them to facilitate workshops on issues decided by the CEF.

These five dimensions of the Project (there were others) are indicative of the CEF project's thrust to create situations in which community research could be combined with community practice which, though stimulated and initiated by outside intervention, from then on became distinctive episodes in the histories of the communities.

EPC researchers were especially interested in the site in Cato Crest, alongside the City of Durban, because it was the first foray by EPC researchers working with a community in an urban environment. There were three researchers, the first of whom was a Professor of Education who had been born in Cato Manor, who had a particular interest in the theoretical dimensions of the CEF project and who compiled position papers for discussion at CEF researchers' workshops.²⁵ The second researcher was a Cato Manor resident whose house overlooked Cato Crest. He was a trained educational researcher and a powerful local preacher who had a strong sense of the importance of language in shaping people's realities. The third researcher was a recently-qualified D.Ed student and

²⁵ She wrote for example about researchers in relation to the 'insider/outsider' question and about researchers and the concept of 'effacement'. She also traced the notion of grounded theory in relation to the progress of the CEF project.

lecturer at UKZN. The latter two had worked together during the Nelson Mandela Foundation project and wrote and presented joint papers at education conferences.

Despite their proximity to the people of Cato Crest, these researchers found the extreme poverty there and the social and spatial complexity difficult to engage with as a 'community', given the multiple ways in which that term shaped how local people perceived themselves. Even though Cato Crest did have facilities and some infrastructure (despite being the least well-endowed section of Cato Manor), people were so disoriented by their material circumstances, history and the effects of political tensions during the local government elections of 2005 that they had an uncertain sense of what or who they were and were largely oblivious of, or ignored, what was available. To generalise dangerously, the people living in Cato Crest seemed to have been so ground down by their struggle to survive from day to day that they could perceive only the immediate and the individually proximal.²⁶

Given such circumstances, researchers had difficulty in finding ways in which a functioning CEF could be established even though they were assisted by a sangoma who assumed the CEF chair so as to resolve the political tensions which had been aroused. Even though a widely representative CEF did function there eventually, it became clear that there must be more time for this process to develop in such a context than the under two years that were available for the Project.

This experience has implications for the location of CETCs in urban areas. Though it is possible to argue that the Cato Manor situation is a particularly fraught one, EPC experience through the CLING project in the Vaal's township conurbations and the expanding area of Freedom Park not far from Soweto offer similarly daunting challenges to neat notions of 'community' and the interaction between outsiders and residents. In the case of Freedom Park, for example, the CLING project has begun to take root after six years, a time lag caused by both researcher and conceptual uncertainty and the multi-complexities of the situation there.

Events with the CEF in the Venda village of Davhana took a different turn. A Venda-speaking EPC researcher was introduced to this village by a local educational official and the idea of a CEF was immediately welcomed by the chief/traditional leader because he understood that a CEF could address problems which neither he nor the School Governing Body could resolve. Furthermore, the relations between the parents and the primary school were so

²⁶ Two stories illustrate the point, both concerning the local chair of the Communist Party. When he was interviewed by a newspaper about the effects of a plague of rats in the area that were biting and infecting children, he made the point that rats also had a right to existence in their struggle to survive. And when this same person was dying, people from the area came before his death and stripped his house of everything that they could take, including doors and windows.

bad that parents refused to divulge any information about themselves and their children to the school. Not age, inoculations, family situation, nothing. Community members did not visit the school and parents did not attend meetings. If they did, they were berated loudly by teachers for a multitude of shortcomings.

The Davhana CEF was served by two influential Community Researchers. One was well linked to business and the leading family and the other was a veteran activist. And once the representative CEF had been established, parents' meetings at the school were well attended, teachers spoke as though to normal adults, and the school was provided with the information it sought. Parents felt free to consult teachers and inform them of factors that pertained to their children's condition and situation. Teachers were offered help with making teaching aids, parents came and beautified the school grounds and so on. The CEF also co-ordinated all the educational activities in the village and linked up with NGOs and community self-help projects.

These examples from both urban and rural contexts suggest the following conceptual issues arising from the community-based nature of the Project:

- Schools became increasingly aware of the material and other realities of their contexts. A high proportion of teachers, especially in rural areas, do not live in places where they teach and in all areas the school fence is remarkable in what it succeeds in keeping out.²⁷
- CEFs brought together the contexts in which the young are educated: the home, the village/community and the school.
- Community members achieved a 'voice' through the CEF which they used to discuss the broad issues concerning education and the community.
- The school was drawn more intimately and emotionally into the greater communal whole. [EPC researchers are aware that this is not regarded as desirable by some scholars.]
- The richness of the data in research of this kind became apparent.²⁸
- In research of this kind, the CEF project decided that the particular should have priority over the general and "our judgements of fact depend upon our constitutive judgements of value, not the other way round".²⁹
- A working hypothesis became, 'the more specific and detailed and concrete the information and thought, the better: the more general, abstract and summarised the commentaries, the worse'.
- Tensions, contradictions and surprises in such research contexts were the normal and the usual. The 'trouble methodology' of the

²⁷ See the paper of the EPC researcher: Dr TT Bhengu. 'Bringing Down the Fence ...'. *Africa Education Review* 4 (2), pp. 131-143.

²⁸ See too Carlos Milani. 2003. Social Capital and Local Development Theories: Lessons from the Pintadas Experience (Bahia, Brazil). cmilani@ufba.br

²⁹ Marjorie Grene. 1966. *The Knower and the Known*. New York: Basic Books, p. 180.

EPC researchers was premised on the conviction that dissension and conflict indicate the presence of the real, since disharmonies express power relationships, as observed by Enver Motala in 2006 at a CEF training workshop for Community Researchers.

- Complexity became an index of engagement with the real, the political and the important. Out of complexity it eventually becomes possible to establish Wittgenstein's 'families' of related issues and events³⁰ about which it is possible to think.

These illustrative examples from an urban and a rural community need to be augmented by insights that emerged for EPC researchers during the course of the CEF project. The somewhat curt formulations that follow are not the gruff claims of fieldworkers with contempt for theory and other forms of intellection. The issues listed here are distillations derived from practice and arrived at through experience on top of longstanding education and training that all the EPC researchers had received over extended periods of time. And if pressed, they could no doubt provide the strings of references that lurk behind these ideas and concerns that they discussed with each other in between bouts of engagement with communities. So the stance is not an anti-intellectual one. Researchers continue to grapple with the issues that follow because they are the kind that resist closure.

What follows has been culled from notes kept during the duration of the CEF project and is attributable to the entire complement of researchers rather than to individuals.

The research orientation of the CEF project

In contradistinction to the history of community-based research, the CEF project did not intend to afflict, rob and abuse the poor. The Project resisted simplification, stereotyping, abstraction and generalisation and thereby the risk of the "epistemological stripping" of people.

There was no attempt to 'understand' communities by either insiders or outsiders. This was regarded as neither possible nor appropriate. Neither were communities regarded as places for 'development' nor for objective research.

The presence of researchers in and participation by community members broke the isolation of many communities, created a rare chance for people to have their concerns attended to and to have some of their preconceptions challenged. For example, some villagers welcomed questionnaires: "This is the first time that anyone has asked me questions". Others responded to them as invasions of privacy, and others invented replies so as to realise, for a moment, conditions under which they hoped to live. For example, many more houses in Davhana were said to contain books than was the case.

³⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein. 1969. *Philosophical Investigations*. New York: Macmillan, paras 66, 67.

The CEF project did not allow the EPC's focus on democracy, human rights and social justice to obscure, by a pre-occupation with power relations for example, the importance of attention to history, politics and culture.

The CEF project sought to achieve more than merely to free people to speak. People like women, the youth, and figures like traditional healers, for example, had to learn to speak to each other and to their community. And community members had to learn to speak to them. Also, it was recognised that voices are not all equal and that they are historically constructed.

In its focus on complexity, the CEF project sought that which had both contradictory and unifying tendencies in it. Thus complexity was not sought for its own sake but used to seek conflict as well as reconciliation.

The CEF project acknowledged the importance and value of tensions between opposing views, interests, ambitions and hopes as well as ideas and aspirations.

Though the CEF project was committed to participatory forms of research, it regarded the standard forms of Participatory Action Research (PAR) critically. For example, PAR was felt at times to expect too much of people and to make claims on their behalf.

The CEF knowledge – such as these assertions – was pragmatic, variable, context-dependent and of value insofar as it enables communities and schools to do what they deem appropriate for themselves.

Researchers faced the question as to whose knowledge is a problem and whose beliefs and culture get written up? In the village of Phetole, the history writers were sent away to redo their job as (a) they omitted women from their first account, and (b) included only Christian forms of religion and belief.

Some assertions about the CEF project's intended impact upon communities

The Project sought to stimulate volition, to create a sense of agency and recognise the value of local knowledge and expertise. In so doing, it sought to reduce what Amartya Sen has styled 'unfreedoms'.

The intention of CEFs was to enable community members to gain understanding of how to deal with information and knowledge, experience and the opening up of possibilities.

It was a purpose of CEFs to revitalise moribund community and civic organisations other than the myriad churches.

CEFs intended to assist communities that were bewildered, which struggled with the processes of change, which clung to verities and which had become unsure of their culture and values.

The CEFs were not intended to solve problems on behalf of the community. For example, the clashes between children's domestic and scholastic duties, and uncertainty over parental involvement in schools were brought forward as problematics by the CEFs and they confronted communities with them first for recognition and then for discussion and possible solution.

CEFs were regarded as having the potential to disrupt the appropriation of community knowledge, to help avoid epistemic violence and to assist with the re-appropriation of community knowledge.

The impact of the CEFs on schools/education

We quoted Hoppers earlier in this article to draw attention to the battle between kinds of knowledge that characterise centrally important aspects of the relationships between South African children and the forms of education to which they are subjected by schools. In many ways, the educational struggle in South Africa is one over whose knowledge and which knowledge is privileged and given the *imprimatur* of those in power (the state), those in financial power (capital, corporations, employers) and those concerned about cultural and local power (artists, linguists, those working to promote heritage and the humanities in general).

When a CEF is established in a community, teachers are no longer the sole repositories of significant knowledge. That shifts radically their position within the broader community. The question is then, what are the implications of rupturing and reconstructing present teacher-parent relationships?³¹ The question of status and the CETCs arises here.

When a CEF is established in a community, the school is no longer exclusively accountable to education officials and the Education Department. It becomes answerable to an increasingly broader local constituency.

Schools have their own financial, moral and behavioural economies. They have their own forms of authority (sanctioned from without), control and discipline. They have their own ways of dealing with parents and officials. How will they and their School Governing Bodies accommodate the presence of CETCs? As was observed by Xola Ngonini in discussion within the EPC, SGBs are there to ensure compliance with policy, whereas CEFs were mediating structures which

³¹ In Tshatshu Village, the CEF, which transmogrified into a CLING, saved the local primary school from being abandoned by parents who were sending their children to school in town. Once the teachers became involved in the literacy and numeracy campaigns launched by the CLING, parents returned to supporting and strengthening the school.

facilitated dialogue between policies, local discourses and discursive practices. The differences between them are huge. CETCs can find roles for themselves in working with SGBs in the forms of training, providing platforms for their meeting and local, co-ordinated school programmes.

The current South African schools' curriculum is actually unimplementable without community support. Have the schools identified what support is necessary and how it will be gained and used? Have community members become acquainted with the curriculum?

Our view is that perhaps the best term for the kind of insights generated by the CEF and other community-based research projects that are gained and recorded by researchers is that they constitute 'recognitions' based on experience and understanding. They are not truths and they have not been verified except through the interactions of EPC researchers from different institutions and organisations through discussing and workshopping them.

The Green Paper's vision (quoted on page 3 above) makes clear the essentially supportive role of CETCs towards communities, including the strengthening of community organisations thereby creating an increased sense of agency and volition. This role for CETCs will be separate from its provision of educative courses for adults and second chance matriculants although a better-educated and qualified community could contribute to the stronger internal organisation of communities. Furthermore, the presence of a CETC has the potential to bring to communities the wider world.³²

CETCs could play an important role as centres where debates, the exchange of ideas, exhibitions and other events occur which draw in community members to attend to and engage with issues of interest and concern. And local artists, performers, speakers and people with contributions to make should be part of the repertoire that CETCs provide. CETCs should not be timid about the topics and points of view that are expressed. Both subtle and robust exchanges and presentations are likely to have the effect of stimulating thought and delight.

The role of CEFs in placing evident difficulties for recognition and discussion by the community is a good example for how CETCs might address issues that the community has been unable to resolve. CETCs should not be cast in the role of problem solvers or mediators but, through formulations of the relevant issues, for example, might enable communities to address the problems themselves. Such a role will require tact and sensitivity to local interests, but it could be done through a non-partisan approach, perhaps once CETCs have been experienced by community members as a positive and trustworthy presence.

³² All communities in South Africa are linked in various ways to 'the wider world' through cell phones, radio and TV and by means of community members who are employed outside of the village.

What relations with the Department of Basic Education and Training in its district, circuit and school manifestations should CETCs be encouraged to establish? It is a vital importance that CETCs stand unambiguously and independently as institutions of the Department of Higher Education and Training. They should be free of and distinct from the Basic Education and Training preoccupations. And yet CETCs should primarily be at the service of and engage first and foremost with their communities. And should CETCs play a role on a CEF, for example, so as to bring schools and communities into constructive working relations? Our answer would be “Yes” provided that the CETC is well-established on its own terms and that it is clear and firm about what its primary roles are.

And how might CETCs play a role in the struggle of communities to deal with HIV and AIDs, early school dropouts, substance abuse, crime and pressing social problems? The ubiquity of such social realities means in effect that no formation can be oblivious of them. There is no quick or glib answer to this question, but it has to be faced. The basic principle of CETCs being there in an engaged and supportive role presupposes that they find a role amid this welter of social concerns. It may be that the CETCs provide platform for informed and thoroughgoing discussions about matters such as these, using expertise that can be brought to bear on such issues.

The Community Literacy and Numeracy Group Project (CLING)

In the middle of the first decade of the 21st Century, South Africans had reason to be deeply perturbed at the low levels of ability in language and number that children in the latter half of their primary schooling displayed.³³

When it was suggested by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands that the EPC link up with three other organisations³⁴ that had approached it as well for funds to conduct research into ways in which the distressing situation in elementary literacy and numeracy at schools could be improved, the EPC members considered what they were best situated to contribute to what eventually became the 3Rs Consortium, with funding for five years, from 2007 to 2011. The Wits EPU and CEPD together came up with three proposals namely, to look into the quality and appropriateness of school learning materials in mathematics, to investigate the situation in multigrade schooling and to launch a community-based project that would establish community literacy and numeracy groups (CLINGs) in urban as well as rural communities. These CLINGs would use multifarious approaches with an entire community to create awareness about and action towards improving levels of literacy and numeracy, both terms

³³ For example, the findings of (a) Department of Education. 2005. Intermediate Phase Systemic Evaluation Report. Pretoria. And (b) University of Pretoria. 2006. Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted in South Africa between 2004 and 2007. Summary Report: South African Children’s Reading Literacy Achievement. Pretoria.

³⁴ The Joint Education Trust, the Human Sciences Research Council and the Programme for Research in Alternative Education in South Africa.

understood broadly so as to include many different forms of literacy and numeracy acquisition and use, both inside and outside schools.

Given the wide scope and long duration of the CLING project, no attempt is made in this article to delineate what it actually was, how it progressed over time and what was achieved by and learned from it. Instead, those experiences and insights which EPC researchers gained that are additional to what has already been said so far will be addressed.

It was decided at the outset by the CLING project to use very wide understandings (including the Freirean tenet of “reading the word and world”) of both ‘literacy’ and ‘numeracy’. Furthermore, no consistent attempt would be made to enter classrooms or seek to influence directly what teachers do, but to work through the animation of the community as a whole around the enhanced acquisition of literacies and numeracies for everyone. The task of creating awareness about literacy and numeracy fell upon the community members. And the centre of engaging in this multifarious and highly complex task was the CLING itself, selected by the community and charged with drawing up a programme of action that included schools, Departmental officials, political groupings and all sectors of the community. The CLING was supported by carefully chosen community members, the Community Researchers, as in the CEF and NMF projects.

What follows is a sharply synoptic list of some issues that came to attention during the period of the CLING project and do not repeat items which emerged from the earlier community-based projects.

1. The CLING project was about mobilising entire communities. To do so requires the skills to (a) communicate the purpose of mobilisation, (b) navigate community diversity, and (c) bring various organisations in and associated with the community together.
2. Those who intervene in communities need to observe democratic practice and display a high order of ethics in their dealings with people.³⁵
3. CETCs are charged by the Green Paper with supporting community organisations. The CLING project would urge CETCs to engage community organisations as well as activists in research undertakings which use and validate local expertise and resources. This would require some training of community organisations in methods, instruments, of being able to think on their feet and so on, but CETCs could expect genuine human expertise to manifest itself as a result.
4. CETCs are likely to be faced by a dearth of civil society organisations in many communities, owing to their collapse after the introduction of democratic local government. In such cases, strategies suggested by local activists should be considered.

³⁵ See Catherine Odora Hoppers. 2009. The Citizen, the Analyst and the Critic. Lecture given at the CEPD, May 2009.

5. CETCs could do much to contribute to the creation of a learning environment in communities, using festivals, competitions, demonstrations, setting up programmes that include schools, becoming involved in materials development and the publication and dissemination of materials. This could promote skills development in the different kinds of writing, both reflective and analytical as well as numeracy skills connected to financial planning, budgets, reading of graphics, computers and so on. Reading and writing clubs have proved deeply worthwhile.³⁶
6. The CLING and its antecedent projects illuminated the deep importance of participation as a method of engagement with communities. This is articulated in the Baatjes/Chaka Report, 'Imagining Community and Education Training Centres'.³⁷
7. The CLING experience suggests that CETCs need to identify where in each community the forces of resistance to their presence are likely to come from. And that might require analysis of the power relations in communities. In gathering information about the community there will need to be thinking about what kinds of information are wanted, how that information can be verified and also what dimensions of reality the enquiry wishes to encompass. For example, would an analysis of *class* be useful?
8. CETCs will be engaged throughout with questions of knowledge. They will be dealing with the movement from information to knowledge, to knowing and then to understanding, and they will be concerned with different forms of knowledge, such as socially engaged knowledge for themselves, for their students and for the community at large.
9. It is likely that CETCs will in many instances be concerned with people from working class and poor communities. From the CLING experience, that would be the appropriate place to locate them. Therefore there is reference to Workers' Education in the next section of this article.
10. In the light of the absence in many communities of public facilities such as libraries, CETCs will have to consider what roles they play to make good the absence of many facilities necessary for education and training.

Additional matters for consideration by CETCs

What follows are a number of areas for incorporation into the ways in which CETCs can be thought about and conceived.

People's Education for People's Power

Far from being outmoded or else an initiative that served its purpose in the 1980s, People's Education for People's Power has much to offer how education and training in South Africa should be oriented. Take, for example, how the concept 'people' is regarded:

³⁶ The late Neville Alexander's organisation in Cape Town, PRAESA, has demonstrated the success of reading clubs in depressed and strife torn urban places.

³⁷ Pp. 11- 12

The concept 'people' in People's Education is [...] neither populist nor workerist, but specifically non-racial and democratic. It recognises the unity and diversity of the social forces which constitute 'the people', and the central leading role of the working class within the perspective of the national democratic struggle [...] The concept 'people' is a historical category which captures the reality of a socio-historical community of people which has evolved to a new qualitative formation in the course of struggle.³⁸

Furthermore, the term 'people's power' is not a simple equivalent to 'political power' but is about people's control of their lives in all aspects on a continuous and local basis.³⁹

The relevance of these two indicative elements to CETCs is openly apparent. In the case of 'people', CETCs are a logical next step in the 'national democratic struggle', and what CETCs should offer to people is the opportunity to take control of their lives. As Mashamba, quoting Kate Philip, observes:

... the power of democratic knowledge lies in the fact that it provides technical and scientific skills as well as the political consciousness necessary to ensure that people are not only able to achieve liberation, but are able to defend their freedom.⁴⁰

Inasmuch as People's Education is essentially about citizenship, it is worth noting the comment by the past mayor of Indianapolis, Indiana, Stephen Goldsmith, quoted approvingly by a corporatist and capitalist agency:

Civil society ... is often called upon to develop all kinds of solutions that government and the market seem incapable of providing. But its chief aim is making citizens. And it does this by helping citizens take greater responsibilities for their communities and by making communities more receptive to the efforts of citizens.⁴¹

Workers' Education

Though not People's Education, Workers' Education should influence what the primary concerns of CETCs should be. Take this definition of Workers' Education:

Workers' Education is based on the acquisition of high levels of literacy and numeracy *and* strives to produce critical social understanding and analysis, plus an awareness of the relations between humanity and an environment that encourages creative, artistic, musical and other forms of thought.⁴²

³⁸ George Mashamba. *A Conceptual Critique of the People's Education Discourse*. Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand. Johannesburg 1989/1992, p. 8.

³⁹ Mashamba. *Op. cit.*, p.12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁴¹ Stephen Goldsmith. 1997. *The Twenty-first Century City: Resurrecting Urban America*. Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, p. 117. In: Centre for Development and Enterprise. 2003. *Creating Urban Citizens*. Johannesburg: New Frontier Series.

⁴² Enver Motala. 2009. Thoughts on Key Issues Affecting the Education and Skills Discussions in South Africa – Post Apartheid. Paper presented to the National Summit on Workers Education, 12-13 November 2009.

Workers' Education is also about employability and lifelong economic activity and should include the skills to build organisations and trade unions as well as include social and political education. But, and here lies the main challenge to CETCs, there are further attributes of Workers' Education:

- It should be based on an analysis and understanding of political economy which directs itself explicitly to the interests of the working and labouring classes
- Its *means* is to extend democratic practice in organisations of civil society, and its *end* is to achieve a just and humane society
- It is an appropriation of the right to think for oneself about the meaning for workers of knowledge and skills, as against control of both by capitalism
- It opens debate about what higher forms of learning should be
- It is based on achieving critical understanding and the capacity to analyse, and encourages creative forms of thought, and
- It is ultimately about changing the relations of power and is thus a primary agent for social change.⁴³

This section confronts CETCs with the question of whose interests (class, culture, gender and the rest) they are designed for and intended to serve? This brings the discussion back to what understanding of 'community' the CETCs will serve. That term does not mean who resides in clusters nearby, or who makes use of the CETCs, but whose interests the CETCs end up serving. If they are essentially instrumental in the harvesting of qualifications, they will serve the state. If they only make it possible for people to participate in very minor ways in the economy, then the CETCs will not challenge the status quo. If they serve the working class and the poor, then the CETCs will seek to create productive, thinking and questioning citizens.

Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences

In what must surely rank as one of the most eloquent, elegant and idealistic of government documents, though wholly feasible in its content, the Department of Higher Education and Training's *Charter for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (2011) must be permitted to speak to the evolution and conception of CETCs.

Here is a taste of what this Charter contains:⁴⁴

Arguing that Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) scholarship can be a repository of heritage, history, memory and meaning as the society strives for

⁴³ Enver Motala. 2007. What Are the Purposes of Democratic Workers' Education and What Have We or Should We Have Learned from the Past About It? Section in the *Material Resource Pack*, National Summit on Workers Education, 12-13 November 2009.

⁴⁴ The full document (Final Report 30 June 2011) deserves reading for its innovative and incisive content.

peace, prosperity, security and socio-economic well-being, the Report states that

These fields of scholarship are an archive of noble and ignoble, justice and injustice, and stand as a constant monitor of our achievements and failures.

They are the custodian of indigenous and endogenous languages, of cultural formations lost and re-created in the striving of the disenfranchised majority to construct an African modernity, proud of its past and mindful of its historical entanglements.

They are the welcoming home of ideas, concepts, cultures and languages from the rest of this globalising planet, and a key filter of the diverse interactions and dignity needed to create a pacific world. (p. 14)

With the recognition of the importance of intellectual, cultural and social capital in the decision to establish CETCs as an additional dimension of the post-school education and training sector, the importance of this Charter and its recommendations becomes evident.

It is by means of the multiple disciplines and their formations within the realm of HSS that communities can come to be understood and understand themselves in the contemporary and future world. Only through the kinds of attention and recognition that HSS provides can the wisdom, the accumulated intelligence, the deep skills and the significance of cultural forms and practices be perceived and linked to other epistemological traditions.

CETCs are unlikely to have the resources to do research into HSS areas such as these. They will be more directly (but not unreflectively) engaged in multiple forms of adult education at community level. But, given their location and proximity, CETCs will be superb platforms for postgraduate researchers in HSS disciplines. Graduates might well seek and make good use of opportunities to teach and conduct research at CETCs.

In addition all of the foregoing, there are two further areas of education in which CETCs can play highly significant roles.

CETCs and Migrants and for Distance Education

The first of these is in meeting the many needs of **migrants**. Advice, orientation, information, counselling and other forms of support will provide assistance of inestimable worth to such people. There is no need to expatiate on the many necessary possibilities at this stage.

The second, more tentative suggestion is the role that CETCs might play in facilitating **distance education**. How this might be done without overburdening the CETCs needs to be thought about and spelled out. Suffice it to say that study centres, for example, through which distance education students can contact lecturers, obtain responses to queries and so on can take many forms and,

because of contemporary modes of communication, do not have to involve people travelling long distances to bricks and mortar structures. The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) has enlightened material on the nature and roles of study centres. However, thought should be given to the role of CETCs and their role in post-school distance education.

Policy implications

Each section of this article has indicated policy implications of the observations emanating from the various community based projects which have been profiled. This final section of the article is aimed at elucidating the broader policy related issues and lessons on Community Education and Training Centres (CETCs) drawn from these projects. The justification for this is that community education is a relatively under researched area of education in South Africa, and this problem has grown worse, as People's Education initiatives foundered mainly on official lack of interest.

While the concept of a CETC is included in the Green Paper, the relatively small amount of space allocated to it implies that this is still a picture that needs to be both drawn and coloured extensively. The intention behind this article has been to explore what we already know about community education in marginalised communities in South Africa and to bring that knowledge to bear on the debate and policy making process in relation to community education in general and CETCs in particular.

The first, and most obvious point from what has already been said, is that developing community based education provision, which truly responds to the needs of a particular community, is a complex task which demands time and sensitivity. The danger is that CETCs will be created with little engagement with the local community (as is the case with schools and FET Colleges) and as a result they will not be fully utilised, will not impact on the local community in the way that they have the potential to do, and will remain outside the community as yet another alien body in that community protected by a fence and security guards.

That being the case, the careful and collaborative planning of each CETC is required which draws on the strengths and knowledge of the community, and where the Centre presents content that is epistemologically relevant to local people using a methodology which is accessible. However, we must be aware that careful planning of this nature is difficult for government which has set extremely high targets for the number of students it wishes to enrol in FET Colleges and CETCs. The danger of cutting corners and establishing CETCs and their programmes before substantial buy-in from the local communities is apparent from this research. South Africa can ill afford another low usage, epistemologically alienating, community education programme as was evidenced with the PALCs. The lesson for government is that it should take the time to set

CETCs up properly even if this means that in the short term numerical enrolment targets set now are not met immediately.

The research also talks strongly to the need for CETCs, as they emerge, to work with existing or nascent democratic (education and training) structures in the local communities and tap into their access and knowledge. This will inevitably mean convening and attending local meetings as well as setting up village and community based programmes. It is important that the activities of the Centres do not remain confined in the physical space of the CETC but are generated and flourish in the communities while being coordinated and funded from the CETC. This means that as with the projects described in this article the starting point is to understand how each community defines education and training, while acknowledging that there may be multiple realities and definitions, and what forms of education and training the community requires. At the same time the planners at the CETCs will need to challenge neo-colonial and neo-liberal based arguments which have taken hold in many communities. Interventions of this kind will require a Freirian understanding of the potentially liberating effect that appropriate education can have on the lives of marginalised communities and their members.

The final lesson from the research is that in the designing of the CETCs no one in the communities to be served by the CETCs should be marginalised from the process, unless they do so themselves or are antithetical to a progressive open democratic process (as with traditional leaders in the Eastern Cape). If we marginalise people we are likely to lose the wisdom and organising ability of such 'diamonds' as the Cato Crest sangoma who helped to hold a fragmented community together.

Conclusion

It is our contention that establishing CETCs which respond to the real education and training needs of rural and peri-urban communities is possible and we have provided some evidence through the four projects presented as to how this can be done. However, the projects also act as a cautionary tale as to how difficult getting the support and participation of these communities can be. One only has to review the service delivery protests that have plagued many ANC led councils to realise that working with such communities is a highly complex and politicised process. The need for openness, honesty, real commitment and a preparedness to work with and not through the community are some of the lessons that we have learned. But we have also learned in conducting these interventions that no community is homogenous and as we state in relation to Cato Ridge and other peri-urban manufactured communities, it is difficult to know whether they can even be defined as a community as the residents often fail to see themselves as part of a community.

It would be a real tragedy if the complexity of establishing CETCs in their local communities was used as an excuse to create yet more education institutions which are divorced from their environment and which mainly offer second-chance school qualifications. The Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training need to understand that using CETCs to hit targets will not produce the desired results. It would be better to have a few CETCs which are well-rooted in their local community as pilot projects to be extended later rather than hundreds which are not established at grass roots level. Once there has been some success with properly developed CETCs these can act as a model for others and their very success is likely to make other communities keen to have a CETC in their locality. That demand side pressure is likely to lead to long-term success for the CETCs. The Post-school Education and Training White Paper needs to take this into account and sketch out a development process for CETCs which has a reasonable chance of success, rather than setting over-ambitious enrolment targets for such Centres. Equally the White Paper needs to problematise and give direction on how such CETCs can include both second chance and adult basic education qualifications and engage simultaneously in community empowerment with relevant courses and activities.

Finally, it is important to note that the Department should expect that conceptualising CETCs in the ways that have been urged in this discussion will produce tensions. Most Department officials are likely to feel more comfortable developing CETCs as self-contained, neatly defined, qualification-awarding institutions – this is assumed to be easier and will not challenge their habitual thinking. However, the lessons of the Peoples' Education movement and those from this study indicate that it would be a mistake to establish CETCs as pale reflections of schools or FET Colleges and will lead to the failure of the potential that CETCs hold for increasing the 'emancipatory consciousness' of communities which can transform peoples' lives. That transformation is the promise that CETCs can hold. Will that promise be realised?

Thanks to Martin Prew for earlier contributions to this discussion.

Michael Gardiner is an Associate Researcher at the Centre for Education Policy Development. mike@michaelgardiner.org

