

Input from Adrienne Bird (in individual capacity) to
MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE MEETING ON THE
REVIEW OF THE FUNDING FRAMEWORKS FOR CET AND TVET COLLEGES

Context

This input is written as a series of points – together they constitute the context and motivation for the recommendations that are provided in the last sections.

- The ‘White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System’ (hereafter WP) is quite clear about **the purpose of TVET colleges**, it states: “The main purpose of these colleges is to train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market. They primarily provide training for the mid-level skills required to develop the South African economy, and tend to concentrate on occupations in the engineering and construction industries, tourism and hospitality, and general business and management studies.” (WP:11/12).
- It goes on to emphasise the **role of employers**: “Since the main purpose of the TVET colleges is to prepare students for the workplace and/or self-employment, it is essential that they develop and maintain close working relationships with employers in their areas of study. Close partnerships between colleges and employers will assist the colleges to locate opportunities for work-integrated learning and help them to place students when they complete their qualifications. In addition, arrangements should be made for college staff to get regular workplace exposure so as to keep abreast of developments in their industries. Employers should also be in a position to advise colleges around issues of curriculum, and experts from industry could teach at colleges on a part-time or occasional basis. Colleges may also be in a position to benefit from donations of equipment from particular employers. (WP:16)
- And it also identifies a **central role for SETAs**: “SETAs should play a role in forging relationships between colleges and employers, using not only their contacts but also their resources to incentivise employers to take on students for workplace learning opportunities. Partnerships between colleges and SETAs will be facilitated by the establishment of offices representing the SETAs in each college. These offices should represent all the SETAs in that that college, and work to promote and facilitate the relationship between the college and individual SETAs in the interests of both.” (WP:16)
- **The centrality of the trades** – although it is not explicitly stated, it can be assumed that the trades are central to the delivery portfolio of colleges, especially if ‘trades’ are assumed to cover all areas and not just engineering (e.g. chefs and tour guides etc). Trades are, after all, the signature qualification for ‘mid-level’ skills in the labour market and should be seen to be equivalent to the degree for universities.
- **Qualifications that require workplace learning** – most of the qualifications that prepare learners for “mid-level skills required to develop the South African economy” require both institution and workplace learning. The skills cannot be acquired through institutional learning alone in the main. The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)’s

qualifications make this requirement explicit for all its qualifications (which include the trades), but they are not the only QC that has qualifications that have this requirement. For the purposes of this argument, within view are ALL qualifications that REQUIRE workplace learning for completion and where the theory and practical component are (or may be) provided by a TVET college. Those that have it as an optional extra, are excluded and should be understood in the traditional mould.

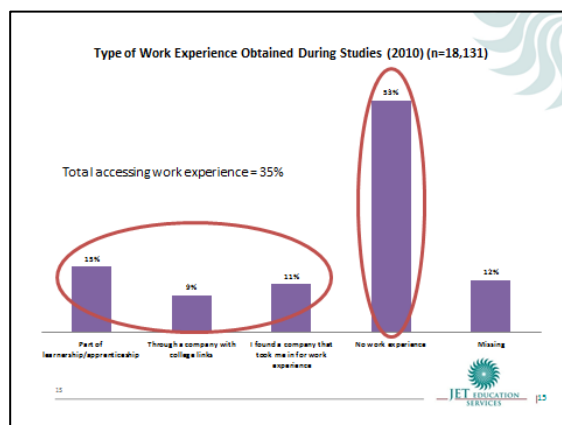
- **Modules of Employable skills** for Community Colleges usually also require workplace learning – this includes the ‘skills programmes’ historically credentialed by the SETAs as well as all Learnerships require workplace learning for instance as do ‘Internships’ and other short courses. Workplace learning for these programmes will frequently take place on government programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme.

Historical background (focus on trades)

- The **traditional apprenticeship** included theory, practical and workplace learning. Most learners completed the equivalent of Grade 9 (Standard 7) for entry into an apprenticeship. ALL learners were required to have signed an apprenticeship contract with an employer BEFORE they enrolled at a college (then called technical colleges). Over the years this evolved into an arrangement where apprentices went to college for a three month period in the first year of their apprenticeship and another three months in the second year of their apprenticeship and for the remaining nine months each year they undertook structured workplace learning consisting of mentored rotation between the different functional areas covered by the trade.
- In the traditional apprenticeship, the theory component was separately quality assured (by the Department of Education) . The programmes were the **NATED** programmes, with N1 (with four subjects) and N2 (with four subjects) having to be passed for entry into the trade test (although in practice many apprentices only completed their N2 trade theory). For some trades, e.g. electrician, the requirement was N3, but this was the exception. But all NATED learners had an apprenticeship contract with an employer (often a state-owned company) and NATED was therefore integral to the apprenticeship system.
- Although the programmes were separately credentialed there was a close relationship between the theory and workplace components – frequently industry were the examiners for the NATED papers and it was not exceptional for industry people to also lecture at the college. The structures that oversaw NATED and the TRADE TEST were BOTH frequently composed of people drawn from both the college and industry.
- **Evolution of disconnect between colleges and industry:** It was only in the 1970s (presumably following the advent of the homelands and the creation of technical colleges in them, far removed from the opportunity for workplace learning) that there emerged what was called ‘the private student’. Private students were students that did NOT have an apprenticeship contract. Employers supported this development as it relieved them of the cost and ‘hassle’ of having to send apprentices to college. It effectively therefore transferred the cost of the theoretical training to the state and gave employers the opportunity to ‘cherry pick’ the best candidates from college after graduation. For learners however it introduced the real possibility of never finding an employer willing to complete their training and hence being forced to enter the labour market at a ‘semi-skilled’ level. Over the years

the number of NATED private students grew and the number without contracts became the norm.

- **Role of Departments of Labour and Education:** in 1994 two departments were created, and the culture of separation between institutional learning and workplace learning deepened.
 - The *Department of Education* proposed to end the NATED programmes entirely by 2005 and introduced in its stead the National Certificate (Vocational) which is a three year college-only qualification which formally requires no workplace learning. The proposal to end NATED programmes was stopped when employers complained that the NATED programmes were still needed for the trades (albeit that they were by now very outdated). The Minister of Education agreed to retain the engineering NATED programmes in the wake of this argument.
 - The *Department of Labour* established the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and mandated them to develop 'learnerships' geared for employment in their respective sectors. Learnerships are required to have as a minimum 70% workplace learning. The theory component could either be provided on the workplace site or be outsourced to accredited providers. The providers were primarily private providers as the public institutions were initially discouraged from providing these qualifications. This often resulted in Learnerships being 'theory thin'. The traditional apprenticeship was retained as an alternative, but whilst the NATED programme was required there was no link between the two.
 - Only post 2009, when the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was established, were public TVET colleges first allowed, and then encouraged to provide learnerships linked to employers. However there was no direct tax transfers made for these programmes, they had to be fully funded by the SETAs – and hence this became a 'third source' funding stream for colleges.
 - Research has shown¹ that a number of NCV learners progressed to learnerships after graduation, although the majority remained without any work experience:



For the learners that did travel between NCV and learnerships, they frequently enjoyed up to NINE years of publicly funded post-school education and training. This is further explored below.

¹ Gewer, Anthony and Akoobhai, Bina: Post-School Education Pathways (or lack thereof) in the South African Education System', 2011.

Analysing the disconnect between 'theory' and 'workplace' learning in SA

Even after the establishment of the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2009 the two programmes (NATED and NCV on the one hand and Learnerships on the other) continued to be seen as alternatives to one another NOT complementary components of a single learning pathway from school to work as had been the case historically. They were managed in separate branches (VCET for theory and Skills for workplace) and the connection between them remained non-existent.

- **Fiscus flows (ministerial programmes only)** Tax money, allocated from National Treasury to the DHET and then on to the colleges, was only allocated to ministerially approved programmes (NATED and NCV). No funds were allocated to the theory component of learnerships for example.
- **Levy flows** via the SETAs (for learnerships, internships etc.) were separately administered on a more decentralised basis. SETAs allocated a given grant to an employer who was then required to secure the theoretical learning from a provider of their choice. As indicated they frequently outsourced this to private providers or provided it themselves in-house in the case of large employers. The recruitment of learners was an employer matter.
- **The cost of not getting interconnection** – too often the practical scenario for learners wanting to acquire trade qualifications was the following which amounts to 9 years of publicly funded learning to train an artisan (cf. three years historically)!
 - Learners frequently completed their matric before proceeding to college (i.e. 3 years of funded schooling for Grades 10, 11 and 12 whereas historically it was Grade 9);
 - Then they completed 3 years NCV at a college (whereas historically it would have been two three-month blocks for NATED N1 and N2);
 - Then they sought, and if they were lucky they got an apprenticeship which was another three years (sometimes requiring them to return to college to acquire the trade theory and other subjects of the NATED programme for trade as well).

This is a **HIGHLY expensive** route to trade. In effect the cost of taking one learner through all these stages could, historically, have taken three learners to trade! For a system that wants to massify quickly, this is clearly sub-optimal.

Proposals on how to bring these back together again

- **The centrality of 'conditionality' for occupational programmes.** In order to bring 'theory' and 'workplace' back together again, it is necessary to look for ways to get the fiscus and the levy to work together. In order to do this the disbursement of the one should be conditional on the disbursement of the other. THIS SHOULD ONLY BE REQUIRED FOR THOSE PROGRAMMES THAT REQUIRE A WORKPLACE LEARNING COMPONENT FOR COMPLETION. It should not apply to those that do not formally require workplace learning for qualification (eg. for NCV). This includes all the QCTO qualifications (and hence all the trades) but can also equally apply to shorter programmes or even skills programmes that require workplace learning.
- **How this might be achieved?**

- Political will – key authority. Firstly a strong direction from Ministerial level is required. Without this the change will not occur and we will continue with a divided and fractured TVET system where the workplace component remains subordinate.
- *What should be conditional on what?* The key constraint for most learners and colleges is the access to workplaces. It is therefore proposed that one should start by identifying the workplace and then commence with enrolment.
- How might this be done?
 - Sequencing planning cycles of SETAs and colleges (5yr and 1 yr): start with SETAs – let them invite employers to apply for grants and let these applications be approved before college enrolment planning begins;
 - Let the employer responses be based on occupational categories (trades) that permit aggregation ACROSS SECTORS e.g. how many employers have approved grants for workplace learning for ‘plumbers’, for example, across all SETAs in a given area. (Electricians can be employed and hence be trained in seventeen sectors). [Strong marketing campaigns and other measures are required, such as ‘lead employer facilitating rotation of learners through various workplaces for different components of their trade – this will bring in small employers on a much wider basis.]
 - Provide aggregated data of all employers in a geographical area willing to take learners for workplace learning for a given trade/trades to the colleges in that area. This will set the broad quantum of learners that can be enrolled by that college in that programme. In time (and it will take time) employers should enter into contracts with learners BEFORE they enrol.
 - Enrolment at colleges – for these programmes that REQUIRE workplace learning – should be premised on the college having access to workplaces for the learners. Consolidated SETA lists for a given area – see above.
 - The SETA offices in colleges should manage the data of employers across all SETAs. They should therefore be primarily centres of data management derived from data consolidated centrally.
 - In this case the allocation of the levy grant IS A CONDITION for the allocation of the fiscal allocation to the college. This is the CONDITIONALITY criterion.
- A strong IT system will be required – the current iWIL system is a basic on which the development could begin. It however needs to bring in the SETA dimension (as employers are unlikely to register without the grant incentive). The current SETA Landscape discussions are relevant here – with the proposed ‘shared services’.
- The real challenge for many rurally based colleges is that there are few workplaces beyond farms and local government, however big projects may be planned in these areas (e.g. Lephalale). In this case the learners may have to travel to workplaces for a transitional period until the projects have materialised. In this case travel and accommodation costs will have to be factored into costing projections.

This may appear complex, but without something like it, theory and workplace will remain divided and the purpose of the TVET system – to create mid-level skills for the growth of the country – will remain elusive. Note – *mutatis mutandis* – this applies to Community Colleges where their qualifications (be they short or longer) require workplace learning.