

THE IDEAL MODEL FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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QUESTIONS WE FACE

- ▶ Why do South African youth remain vulnerable and marginalised in spite of substantial government spending on support for them?
- ▶ Why does unemployment remain so high in spite of the Skills Development Levy and affirmative policies?
- ▶ How can we make adult education offerings worthwhile to millions of South Africans who still suffer from educational deprivation?
- ▶ How can we help young South Africans believe that getting into university is not the only positive option?

POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

We need a shared, new understanding of Community Colleges as places where:

- ▶ all kinds of training is offered to people at all stages of life;
- ▶ training relates directly to people's daily life, particularly to safety and sustainable livelihoods and the needs of women;
- ▶ training articulates with all levels of schooling and includes stand-alone formal and non-formal options;
- ▶ people have free access to the internet, and learning options and resources;
- ▶ people meet for community activities and access mobile clinics, mobile libraries and services from Home Affairs, or whatever they need;
- ▶ people volunteer for a range of community services and gain experience;
- ▶ local, provincial and national government departments, civil society organisations, businesses and NGOs / CBOs cooperate to serve ordinary people well.

POLICIES, NEW VISION AND THE MAIN OBSTACLE

- ▶ An enabling policy environment exists
- ▶ South Africa has the capacity to develop and run a thoroughly effective Community College system
- ▶ The main obstacle is that we are trapped in the 'Bantu education' / 'night school' image of adult education
- ▶ It is difficult to imagine investing in and running an adult and community system that has decent infrastructure, up to date technology, and the flexibility to be constructively and imaginatively responsive to needs of communities.
- ▶ To change the system, planners, organisers, educators – and importantly, learners **must expect** an entirely new kind of institution

A POWERFUL CATALYST FOR CHANGE: INTERNET ACCESS

- ▶ A central recommendation is that all learning centres that make up the Community College system should be enabled to offer free WiFi and access to the internet to enrolled learners as well as to members of the surrounding community.
- ▶ Although initially costly, this is less expensive, simpler, quicker and easier to implement than other interventions (such as retraining educators) that could transform the Post-school system from one in the tradition of old style night schools to one that is relevant to people's current needs.

ADVANTAGES AND SPINOFFS OF OFFERING INTERNET ACCESS:

- ▶ CLCs would immediately be attractive to all in the community, especially young people;
- ▶ Limitations of educators / resources at CCs could be lessened by access to, and training in, OERs - educational texts, interactive materials, recorded lessons, demonstrations etc on the internet;
- ▶ A database of electronic materials specifically relevant to SA contexts and geared to our Community Colleges could be created, regularly updated and adapted to specific needs without the expense of print materials;
- ▶ It would make communicating with learning centres and delivering materials to them inexpensive;
- ▶ Administration (e.g. registration, appointment of educators, submission of marks) could be computerised and done online, thus improving accuracy avoiding having to deliver hard copies;
- ▶ CLCs could be centres of access to information relating to further study, NSFAS, career information, work opportunities, non-formal learning, marketing opportunities for crafts and produce, and so on.
- ▶ It would be easy to make information and opportunities available to people in rural areas and including them in the post school system
- ▶ It would shift the post school system into the modern era.

STAFFING

- ▶ There are new minimum requirements and new qualifications are being developed
- ▶ Good staff will be attracted by offers of solid employment
- ▶ Existing staff will need training in:
 - ▶ how to use electronic devices such as tablets, smart phones, etc
 - ▶ general internet use;
 - ▶ how to find and access learning material that meets learners' needs;
 - ▶ selecting, downloading and adapting material;
 - ▶ dealing with hazards of the internet.

FUNDING OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Investment in Community Colleges should not be seen as an unwelcome cost, but as a worthwhile investment with the potential to yield real gains for ordinary South Africans.

- ▶ Funding cannot come from course fees.
- ▶ It could come from SETAs and the National Skills Fund
- ▶ With the introduction of access to the internet, income from advertising becomes possible. But careful control should be exercised here, particularly in view of South Africa's recent history of the use of electronic information to prey on grant recipients.

INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Community Colleges should be characterised by suitable and sufficient learning resources, including technological resources that enable secure internet connectivity, and have the capacity to rapidly access a range of learning resources.

FORMAL LEARNING PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ Training in both hard and soft skills should be offered, to “improve livelihoods, promote inclusion into the world of work and that supports community and individual needs”, for example, NQF Level 1 General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), and the new NQF Level 4 National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA).
- ▶ Community Colleges should offer skills, vocational and occupational programmes funded by SETAs or the NSF.
- ▶ In view of the well documented threats to food security and energy, education relating to agriculture and sustainable energy should be offered.
- ▶ Harmony should be created between policies and regulations pertaining to Higher Education, TVET and Community Colleges.
- ▶ A clear system of credit recognition and transfer must be developed.

LEARNING PATHWAYS FOR STUDENTS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- ▶ Access to all courses at Community Colleges should be open. Learners should be allowed access to whatever class they believe they can cope with, and should be allowed to switch to a lower or higher level if they find the course below or above the level they need.
- ▶ Learners should not have to travel far to access learning. Funding and logistical constraints mean that CLCs need to offer education using a combination of delivery methods.
- ▶ CLCs need to accommodate learners facing barriers to learning; particular attention needs to be paid to access for people with disabilities, particularly those from poor families.
- ▶ CLCs need to offer coaching in how to compile portfolio of evidence for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer.

NON-FORMAL LEARNING AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community Colleges must recognise that many adults value non formal education more than formal qualifications, and should offer whatever non-formal options appeal to the local population.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN COMMUNITIES

- ▶ Community Colleges must locate themselves firmly within local communities, meet local needs and contribute to local development.
- ▶ Good communication with all stakeholders is essential for Community Colleges to function effectively.
- ▶ Government departments should use the services of Community Colleges for upskilling their workers.
- ▶ Community Colleges should strive to offer educational opportunities that appeal to business enterprises within their reach.

IN CONCLUSION

A completely new Community College system could open the doors of learning to many for whom they are currently closed.